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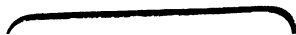


THE RESUSCITATED





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# THE RESUSCITATED.



# THE RESUSCITATED.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS,

MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT, ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

COUNT G. DE CROÿ,

LATE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, CONSUL GÉNÉRAL, ETC.



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## PREFACE.

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IT is to me a matter of surprise to find that no translation, till now, has been given of the works of one of our most illustrious French authors, whose brilliant genius shines out with conspicuous lustre.

Alexandre Dumas  *fils* , the son of the world-known Alexandre Dumas, must have had, with such a predecessor, a difficult task to distinguish himself in literature, but he set at nought the old saying, that rarely the paternal talent descends to the son of a celebrity.

Alexandre Dumas  *fils* , a member of the right famous French Academy of Forty, which contains in its bosom the most scientific and learned men, who have chosen him their perpetual secretary, proves, therefore, the old adage, of which we have just now spoken, an erroneous one. He never will be consigned to oblivion; many of his works will outlive him. He possesses the superiority in all qualities of sweetness, thoughtfulness, and purity of language, in which latter he doubtlessly excels his father, whose numerous works, nearly all based on historical truth, are nevertheless the delight of the homely fireside.

Alexandre Dumas  *fils*, unlike his illustrious homonyme, has taken mostly his different characters out of modern life. He chastises vice with due forms. He shows that former writers, who distinguished themselves by their delicacy and chastity of bearing, are no longer read ; that love has disappeared, and sensuousness taken its place.

He tries to show in some of his works that voluptuousness without taste ; dissects in broad daylight town life, laying bare, with revolting shamelessness, the tissue of the most secret vices. But as this species of morbid anatomy requires some variation to relieve its sameness, he sometimes transports the libertinism into the country, and, through the medium of a sort of pastoral, exhibits the fashionable delinquencies, and delights his reader in a transparent disguise with the representation of licentiousness. It is a spurious ideal, who helps him, however, to scourge vice in its most hidden recesses, and at the end shows virtue victorious and its true greatness.

If I avail myself to give a general appreciation of his works not always thoroughly understood, it is to dispel some prejudices which may exist as to the morality of some of them, notwithstanding their noble aim to show vice in its hideous or attractive forms, but finally always vanquished by virtue and righteousness

The book which I offer to the public distinguishes itself by the harmonious link which unites all persons of this novel, and the plan with which it is arranged furnishes easily the means to follow them, even often panting with expectation at the course of events, and tracing in its progress the revolutions of style, manners, and morals which mark the different periods through which this

novel runs. I have made no explanatory notes, and avoided superfluous annotations. The great attractions of this novel are the three celebrated works which form its basis: they are too well known by their beauty to need praise. Those beauties gave to the author sufficient matter to give vent to his brilliant imagination, which allows him to restore to life the three famous interred couples, so that they may finish their earthly pilgrimage and destiny. The reader will find, certainly, with great pleasure, the giant poet Goethe's youthful manhood, then already exposing his terrible philosophy of life, an opinion nevertheless shared by the kind, genial poet of 'Paul and Virginia,' the meek Bernardin de Saint Pierre. Finally all ends well, to the glory of a God of mercy, who recompenses virtue, punishes vice, and allows the erring but repenting sheep to return to the pale and breathe the heavenly air

I have chosen as a firstling this novel, which, to my knowledge, suits English taste. I have some hope that I am not mistaken, and that the public will encourage me to soon give another of the series of this celebrated author's works. The present one is translated from leaves differing very little with the book which appeared later, by the name of 'Rector Mustel,' then unknown to me. Delighted with the novel, I wrote to M. Alexandre Dumas  *fils*, whom I knew at his father's when *quite* a youth; and reminding him of some circumstances, I asked his permission to translate his work in different languages, which brought forth the amiable answer which I herewith add to my Preface, for the satisfaction of the readers.

*Copy of the note of Alexandre Dumas fils, to Count de Croy:—*

“C'est avec le plus grand plaisir, monsieur, que je vous donne l'autorisation de traduire et de publier en Anglais et en Allemand le roman les Revenants, publiés chez Michel Lévy, sous le titre, le Regent Mustel.

“Mille vœux et affectueux souvenirs,

“(Signé) A. DUMAS *fils*.

“11 Mai, 1876.

“Pour copie exacte, Ch. G. de Croy.”

After these explanations, bidding farewell to my readers, I hope that I have sufficiently appropriated the thoughts of the poet, and have been therefore able to satisfy the English, whose marvellous intellectual and material development I eagerly followed for more than half a century. May the translator have the satisfaction to find approval and content from the public, to whom he addresses the present lines, which will be to him a real recompense for his intellectual labour.

G. DE CROY.

LONDON, *November*, 1877.

## THE RESUSCITATED.

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IN the year 1791, on a most beautiful May morn, a gentleman, from sixty-five to sixty-eight years of age, dressed in the most simple style of that period—just such as the so well known statues of Rousseau and Voltaire show to us—walked along the borough of St. Marceau, which borough at that time may just have been as long as in our days.

Nothing could be improved in the physiognomy of this gentleman, whose whole features expressed good-will, frankness, and loyalty.

After having reached the extreme end of the borough St. Marceau, he at once began to examine more intently its environs, and remarking a small house surrounded by fruit-trees whose odorous blossoms were here and there scattered about by the morning wind, he quickly approached it.

The small house was a modest residence; it had only two floors, and a child could easily, in less

than a minute's time, have walked around the walls which bordered it.

The old gentleman stopped before a little door painted in green, broken in the wall, which—a not useless precaution in a quarter inhabited by numbers of vagabonds—was covered on the top with broken pieces of glass bottles. Ringing a bell, the shrill sound of which made a dog bark, he waited smilingly for an answer, like a man who is quite sure that his visit would cause a surprise. Scarcely half a minute passed, when an old woman opened the door, crying out to the dog, which continued barking,—

“Be quiet, will you, Fidèle!”

The dog growled some little time longer, but, remarking that the visitor had no evil intentions, he was withdrawing to his kennel; but, to prove his bad humour, he still raised his tail in the form of a trumpet, which is, and always has been, a significant mark of that canine race to which Fidèle had the honour to belong.

“Whom do you wish to see?”

“Mr. Bernardin de St. Pierre.”

“He is within.”

“Can I see him?”

“Certainly, sir. Whom shall I announce?”

“Please to announce one of his old friends. I wish to leave to him the pleasure of recognizing me.”

The old woman asked the visitor into the garden, shut the door, and went towards the house, getting easily up the front steps.

The old gentleman, once left to himself, looked with particular attention at every object which surrounded him, and, though he never had been before in that garden,

it seemed, considering the extreme satisfaction which he showed to the whole, that he had expected to find it just as it was before him. Nothing, indeed, was more simple, and, nevertheless, more enchanting than that garden.

Acquainted as you are now with the name of the proprietor, it would be useless to give a longer description. The whole appearance of the house showed the character of the proprietor, as if reflected in a mirror.

During the whole time that the old gentleman looked at the odorous cherry-trees, the regular hyacinths, the thickly-leaved lilacs, as well as to the walks, covered with a fine sand, to which, after a sweet morning rain, the sun gave the lustre of pearls and glittering diamonds, the proprietor made his appearance on the foresteps of the hall-door.

Bernardin de St. Pierre at this time could have been fifty-three years of age. Every one knows his face, full of kindness. Holding his hands above his eyes, so as to see better from a distance, he rushed at once towards the old gentleman, who opened to him his arms.

"Mustel ! my dear Mustel !" cried he. "You here ? How happy am I to see you !"

Warmly shaking hands, and embracing over and over again, was all that the friends did ; and, indeed, it was done with heart and soul.

The old woman looked on in surprise, but, at the same time, with real pleasure, at this scene ; she appeared happy with all that could give pleasure to her master.

"My good Talbot," said Bernardin to her, "prepare us instantly a good breakfast, bring us up the best wine we have in our cellar ; and you, my good, my dear Mustel, you



sit down on that mossy bench. How happy am I in your visit ! ”

“ You have, I see well, immediately recognized me.”

“ What ? If I have recognized you ? Even blind, I should, nevertheless, know you again. My heart sees you. Is it possible to forget a professor like you ? ”

“ Pray do not call me any longer your professor.”

“ And why not ? ”

“ Because one must be quite a different man to what I am to have educated such a sort of scholar. Who can venture to call himself professor to the man who has written ‘ Paul and Virginia ’ ? ”

“ Psha ! compliments.”

“ No such thing ; it is only the pure truth. But allow me, great man, to look at you again.”

“ Nonsense ! What is all that for, dear Mustel ? ”

“ You ask why I am standing in admiration before you. After having rung the bell at your door, my heart was strongly beating. I scarcely hazarded to enter. Yes, after having loved you like a son, I admire, I venerate you now like a god ! ”

“ Blessed be the saints ! leave off.”

“ I stand by my word, like a good god. I have travelled two hundred miles so as to be able to tell you that.”

“ Do you live still in Amsterdam ? ”

“ Yes and no ; but, at all events, I shall not return there.”

“ And the journalism ? ”

“ Is dead for me. I have been in it these thirty years, but now it is quite time to do something else.”

“ That is easy. Let us stay together.”

"Thanks. The work I have in view wants solitude. Besides, I wish to travel a little. I have been too a long time quietly at home. I will see the world, and study humanity. It is, indeed, a little late, but, as Solon says, we can still learn in every age. But you give to our conversation quite a different turn, and I therefore come back to my fixed idea."

"And that is?"

"'Paul and Virginia.' Let us speak of it. For that purpose only I undertook the journey. I have to put to you a mass of questions about it. I have promised to write to all your admirers. The admiration of Dutchmen may be indifferent to you, but it is still always admiration."

"I am indeed touched."

"Please answer me. When did you write that masterpiece?"

"After my return from the Isle of France."

"Why did it not appear sooner?"

"I had read it in society, where it was found bad."

"Stupid creatures! But *you*, you knew that it was good; you must have known it."

"Yes, truly; but I had not sufficient money, neither the courage to stand up for my opinion. Besides, I continually added to it."

"What a wonderful work! You will give me one, I hope, with your dedication."

"Certainly; but you will also give me your books."

"Do I write any?"

"Egotist!"

"How so?"

"You like to keep your philosophy to yourself ; and how much good could you do with it?"

"You joke."

"No, really ; I know you well, Master Mustel. How many times have I heard you, without leaving your seat, appeal to our whole moral world, which answered immediately to your voice. You alone, you kept quiet and with even temper in the midst of unchained passions, not understood by men. Victorious you put in evidence cause, development, and result. For everything you found the reason ; to each object you gave the place to which it belonged, and, keeping the exact medium between Providence and hazard, between ideal and materialism, between good and bad, your man was as you saw him—the real man. You are one of those continually searching spirits, one of those eternal analyzers, for whom the world is nothing more than a spectacle, at which you may often candidly laugh. Generally, that sort of study dries up the heart. Heaven be blessed ! your heart has been left intact. I have, therefore, two reasons to love you, and proud am I that my book pleases you."

"In the times in which we are living, my dear Bernardin, in the century which has seen Voltaire, every man is more or less an observer, and seeks for a reason to be such ; more particularly one who, like me, leads forcibly a sedentary life, and sees everything from the same place. Our view is then limited by the same horizon, and swayed by the same impressions. They give us, at first, a certain assurance, but later they fall back into much too narrow proportions. In such a case all that is left in the mind is an admiration for those who,

like you, plunge boldly into the immensity of the physical and moral world. My philosophy is obscure, even selfish, as you have the right to call it, and, seeing man so little, so pitiful, it would be dangerous if I did not know how to mingle a bit of heart with it ; so much the better, then, that I keep it to myself. But we will speak of you, my dear friend, of you—who, just the contrary, have an aim, and a successful one, to raise humanity ; and let me, therefore, simply perform my duty of a *curioso*. Let us, then, resume our conversation where we left it. I told you you had done wonders, and I repeat it ; notwithstanding that, you must yourself know it, and as well as I. Oh, I hope you are not one of those who humble themselves in order to be extolled so much the more. Real genius has a knowledge of its power, of its own value ; it has no better judge than itself, and when it has done well it avows it. I do not ask that he should proclaim it to the whole world, but I expect that he should own it. You must receive many congratulations, many letters, and many questions ?”

“I cannot complain ; I have bought with that little book my humble cottage.”

“Bravo ! Bravo !”

“I have since purchased two acres of land in Essonne, on a charming island, and built there something which is neither house nor cottage, but something which is very comfortable. You shall see it.”

“Well done ! But has not the king sent to you ?”

“The king ? Nothing !”

“Then the Duke of Orleans, who always opposes everything, must have been charming ?”

"He has withdrawn my pension."

"You jest?"

"In no way, unfortunately, as I am not rich."

"And the ladies?"

"Which ladies?"

"Do they not all write to you?"

"Oh! I have a drawer full of those *pattes de mouche*; here is even one writer who, by all means, wishes to marry me."

"Well?"

"I have refused."

"She was ugly?"

"The contrary; she was young, pretty, and worth millions: but she was a Protestant, and required that I, Bernardin de St. Pierre, I should turn a Protestant. If ever I get married (and I begin to get a little old for that) I wish to have a wife of my own choice, and not one who has chosen me. I will match my heart, and not my vanity."

"Well said; but tell me, dear friend, is it true that you have known Virginia, as I was assured?"

"Certainly."

"Then the story is a true one?"

"Except the issue."

"Virginia is not dead?"

"Not in the least!"

"And Paul?"

"He lives."

"Thus the catastrophe which made me weep so much—"

"Is a pure invention."

"Oh, what are you telling me! But what has become of those two delightful creatures?"

"They are married."

"In the Isle of France?"

"No; in Germany, inhabiting a ravishing little town called Brunswick."

"You are joking?"

"No; upon my word!"

"Come with me," said Bernardin de St Pierre, rising from his seat, and ushering Mustel to his study. "There is a drawer full of their letters; they write to me every week."

"Oh, I scarcely can recover my senses! And are they happy?"

"Perfectly happy. Virginia's aunt died, and, being the heiress, she wrote to Paul to come. He left with Margaret and Madame de Latour. The two young people got married in Paris, and, liking solitude, they have retired to Brunswick, really in one of the most charming countries of the world. Virginia is now Madame Paul; she has two fine children, a girl and a boy. Mrs. de Latour and Margaret have since died; but they died happy, seeing their sweet hopes for the future realized."

During their conversation, St. Pierre showed him a parcel of letters, some signed Virginia, the others Paul, which Mustel perused with admiration.

"So they live?"

"As well as you and I. It is only two days ago that I received news of them. Now, dear Mustel, there is an opportunity to study the human heart as you desired. Go to Brunswick, visit Paul and Virginia, and, after having seen them, tell me, what life has really made out of those two children, and what it may keep in reserve for them. It might be very curious; they perhaps do not

tell me all ; and, doubtless, there are many interesting details of their own life which escape even themselves, and which *you* at once would discern and take hold of."

"That is a good idea."

"I will give you a letter to them :—

" 'DEAR CHILDREN,—I introduce to you one of my good friends, Mr. Mustel, late a head-master in the college where I was educated. He already loves you, and desires to make your acquaintance. You will receive him just as you would receive me. I embrace you, and the children.

" 'Your friend,

" 'HENRY BERNARD DE ST. PIERRE.' "

Mustel followed with avidity every word the poet wrote down. He really seemed to dream.

He continually exclaimed, "I do not trust my senses, I shall see Paul and Virginia !"

"There is your letter of introduction."

"And now where is that copy of your work which you just promised me ?"

"Quite fair."

Bernardin, opening a band-box, took out of it a small blue-covered stitched book, and wrote on the first page,—

"To my good and excellent professor, to my old and beloved friend, Head-master Mustel."

He then signed, and added the date to it.

"Thanks, a thousand thanks," said Mustel, bringing the book close to his lips ; "but now tell me, my dear friend, why did you allow me, as well as very many others,

to bewail, to mourn, those poor children, who still live, and whom the reader would have been so delighted to see happy?"

"Ah, my dear friend," answered the author, with a grave voice, "that is the privilege of art; that is the right of the poet, to embellish the *dénoûment* of a true history with his fancy, so as to answer the object he has really in view. Thus acts the painter, who composes—out of some sketches drawn here and there, a fair, correct, uniform, and splendid painting. Our art is nature—nature compressed in a book. God creates the individualities, and we utilize them, to prove some great verity. God possesses eternity to accomplish His aim; but we, we have only some pages. Our work once done, we give those creatures back to Him who has lent them to us, and He does with them what He thinks best. It is in the general creation that we look out for our own, we seize everything that Nature offers, but without impoverishing her, and *thus* enrich humanity.

"I have known those charming creatures called Paul and Virginia, I have watched their so deeply felt first love. I have in silence assisted at the development, the unfolding, of their double individuality in the midst of a primitive nature. Love and nature were utilized, were turned to account, for my philosophical intentions, and to the social end I had proposed to myself. I wished to create two most perfect human natures, thanks to the lessons they had received, and untouched by materialism and flatness; I found out that the *only* means left to me, so that their souvenir may live in its sublime purity, was for death to happen just at the moment when their dearest dreams were on the point of being realized.



“They live—so much the better—I am delighted, because I love them ; but, from the artistical point of view they no longer exist for me. They are married, that is, that they are therefore in the most ordinary conditions of humanity, and, as long as they exist on earth, the ideal life I gave them, to which may be added a small particle of their real existence, will long outlive them. Do you now, my dear friend, understand what is the difference between my Paul and Virginia and the real ones ?

“The world is, and was always full of those people which a life’s incident supplies with stuff for a study of which those concerned have not the least suspicion. I do not speak thus with regard to Paul and Virginia, who even to-day are the personification of innocence, virtue, and charity ; but—they live !

“Who knows if it would not have been better for them that God, as I did in my poem, had allowed them to die in reality ? Who knows if they will not regret one day to have obtained from Heaven what they asked so fervently for ? On my account, my mission accomplished, it does not concern me any longer ; I have shown by their death what I could not show by their life, that death is a recompense, and *not* a punishment, that it unites instead of separating, and that if two pure hearts tend towards each other when two perfections accidentally meet in nature and would be united, heaven only is pure enough, and eternity alone large enough, for such a holy union. Death is *then* no more than the bower of eternal life, than the outburst of an earthly dream towards its inexhaustible realization.

“Look there,” added the poet, growing more and more

exalted, and retaking out of the hand of Mustel the book he had just given him. "See, read! what I make the old man say to Paul for his consolation. The whole philosophy of my book, is perhaps contained in those few lines:—

" "There is a God, my son, a God to whom entire nature bears testimony. Do you think that this God leaves Virginia without reward? Do you believe that the same Power who has cased that noble soul in so beautiful a form, in which you enjoyed His divine art, could not have drawn her out of the waves? That He who has adjusted the actual happiness of mankind by laws of which you are ignorant could not, by laws equally unknown to you, prepare another blessing to Virginia. If, when moving in the eternal nothingness, we should have been capable of thought, would we then even have been able to form for ourselves an idea of our existence? And now that we are in that dark, that transitory state called world, can we foresee what awaits us after our death, and what finally becomes of us when we have shuffled off this mortal coil?

"Without doubt there is somewhere a sphere where virtue receives its recompense. Virginia is now happy. Ah! if from that orb, where the angels dwell, she could communicate with you, she would say to you in her farewell,—

" "Oh, Paul, life is only a trial. Faithful to the laws of nature, of love and virtue, I have crossed seas to obey my parents, I have renounced riches to keep my faith, and I preferred to lose life than to transgress modesty. Heaven found *then* that my earthly career was worthily,

was sufficiently filled up. I have for ever escaped poverty, calumny, and tempests, as well as the sight of others' grief and pain: none of the evils which frighten mankind can henceforth reach me; and you pity me? I am pure and unalterable like the particle of light, and you desire to recall me to that night of life! Now I am in that immortal source of beauty from which runs down all that is sweet on that earth. My soul sees, hears, relishes, feels, and breathes at once in a bliss which she scarcely could feel before with her weak organs,

“All that an infinite Power, or a celestial kindness, could do to console an unfortunate being, all that the love and friendship of an infinity of creatures enjoying the same felicity can yield, harmonious in mutual ecstasy—all that we experience, pure and unchangeable.

“Bear, therefore, your trial unshaken, to increase the happiness of your Virginia, by a love without end, through a hymen whose flames can never more be extinguished.”

Bernardin remained silent.

“Enrapturing language!” cried Mustel, wiping his eyes, full of undisguised admiration.

“Yes, those are splendid pages,” repeated, with a noble self-confidence, the poet, “which I should *not* have been able to write, if I would have only depicted the quiet and common happiness of a human betrothal.”

“Indeed, they are such as to make one *long* for death!”

“Not we—we are too old; but what I have not put in

that book," added St. Pierre, returning the volume to his friend, "and which, notwithstanding, is my secret and intimate conviction, is that the time has come more than ever to present death to mankind in its most consoling aspect, and prepare him for it by great examples."

"What would you say?"

"I would say, that the terrible word of Louis XV., 'After me the end of the world,' is very near realization; that the old social world cracks in every corner and crevice, from one Pole to the other; that the popular earth-giant, fastened on his back, tormented by his chains, in agonizing perspiration awaits the boiling lava like that of Mount Etna.

"Something strange roars and rumbles beneath me, like that subterraneous voice, which in the colonies warns you before an earthquake. But here is not only a mountain which displaces itself, but a whole society turned up and torn asunder, plunging in an abyss. The future is full of tempests. When I say the future, I may as well say the present; and in that cataclysm, long foreseen by all serious thinkers, many innocents will perish. There is no vanity in saying that to us, who have a superior intellect, it is a duty to represent death even when unjust, so contrary to the views of mankind, as a joy, as a happiness. That was my aim, my dear friend, and who knows if this little book will not strengthen one day some innocent convict to return with real Christian humility to his God?

"But decidedly, that is too much philosophy for one day. Behold, my dear friend, what it is, to speak with

an author of the tendency of his books, and escape doing that for the future."

And with those concluding words the worthy man began to laugh.

"Let us breakfast now."

"And continue to philosophize."

"Then you will go to Germany?"

"I really think so."

"Remind me to give you still another letter."

"To whom?"

"To a young man who has written nothing yet, but nevertheless is stronger than we all. I made his acquaintance on my last journey. I shall be not a little mistaken if he does not become very strong."

"You call him—"

"Goethe!"

It was at least ten minutes since Mary Talbot had come to the door to tell her young master, as she still called him, that the breakfast was ready; but, listening, she heard him reading with a loud voice, and recognizing that it was a sentence of 'Paul and Virginia,' which she knew by heart, she took precious good care not to disturb Bernardin. The breakfast seemed to keep warm of itself, and be it that it was as literary as Mary Talbot, or what is more likely, that it was put back to the fire, most certainly, the breakfast when both the friends sat down at the table, was found excellent. As you may presume, they continued to talk of the subject on which they had been conversing.

Mustel asked what had become of Margaret and Madame de Latour's faithful servants, Dominick and

Mary? He learned that after having wept much, after having in vain asked to come to Europe, by the advice, the entreaties, and even by the orders of both mothers who understood perfectly well that the happiness of those two good people was only to be found at their native place, they stopped at the Isle of France. As for Fidèle, he died quietly through old age, and all that was left of him was the name given to the dog whose acquaintance we made at the beginning of the chapter. But as every conversation, even the most interesting, finally wears itself out, and dissolves itself in a manner which has no interest at all for us, the two friends separated, taking another rendezvous for the following day.

Mustel had proposed to himself to stop in Paris two or three days. He stayed, however, three weeks, almost continually in the cottage at the borough of St. Marceau. It causes so much pain to hearts which understand each other to part. But the old gentleman at last understood that the longer he remained, so much the more he wished to stay. He formed eventually the resolution to leave, after having promised to return soon, and to accept the hospitality offered to him by Bernardin at Essonne.

To put an end to such indecision, Mustel, accompanied as far as the stage-coach by his disciple, and provided with two letters, one to Paul, the other to Goethe, finally departed. Embraces, shaking hands, wishes for a good journey, promises of a speedy return, with a prudent prevision, a basket packed up with provisions, emotion in both voices, good-natured and sweetly checked tears, nothing was wanting, as those two brave hearts separated.

As regards Mustel, like all travellers who leave a friend behind, moving towards the unknown, there was a moment when he asked himself why he was leaving, and why he did not rather allow that the habits of his life took quietly root there, where during three weeks he had been so comfortable. But suddenly the guard bustled about, the horses tossed their noisy little bells, and off went the coach. Now it was too late, there was no longer, unless by an exaggerated sensibility, the possibility of living together. But there was hope, sweet hope to meet again, and both entertained that in the depth of their souls. The heavy coach did not go quickly; but the vehicle which takes away from us some beloved one, even though journeying step by step, will ever appear to us rapid as lightning. A last sign, and all was over.

At that period one went not as nowadays, by railway, in two days from Paris to Brunswick, in splendidly stuffed, sleep-inviting carriages, with restaurants at every station, and hotels open the whole night, to refresh the fatigued traveller. Nothing of this kind: it was slow travelling, compelled to change the vehicle every minute, and see every half-hour the cords by which the horses were attached broken to pieces. We had then no idea of the speed which has spoiled us so much in our days. Huddled one upon the other, nearly suffocated, eating little, sleeping badly, the arrival at our place of destination was not so very easy.

After having thus travelled twenty-five or thirty leagues, one must be a hero or a runaway convict if not longing to stop. Mustel, being lucky enough to be neither one nor the other, had scarcely seen the houses of

the little village of Montcornet, shattered as he was and bruised all over, than he asked to stop and take breath for at least two days. In fact, it was not too much, as upon the whole nothing forced him to such a haste. June revelled gaily through field and country, with its radiant train of sunbeams, with its perfumes and clouds of dust; the trees, with their merry population hopping and skipping to and fro, carolling forth praise to God with love and happiness. The withered thatched roofs glittered like silver spangles in the sunshine, and the blue-tinted hillocks showed in the twilight their sharp outlines as if carved in the tender azure of a tranquil sky.

Children ran barefooted on the road; the smoke rose at dinner-time in straight columns in the air, mingling itself, without any effort, with the east wind. The waterman brings back, singing, the oars from his bark, moored on the banks of the limpid river; the peasant sleeps in the cornfield, and the traveller under the thick shelter of a large tree on the road. It was summer—the summer in its full pride and splendour. To what purpose thus prefer one place to the other; to what purpose hasten on towards other spots? Everywhere stillness, reverie, and sun. Thus thought Mustel, and he stopped in consequence.

The inn he put up at, simply for the reason that there was only one in the village, looked more like a farm than an inn.

A passenger was there considered no more than a mere looked-for accident. He was well received; but, if dissatisfied, he had only to go where he thought himself better off.

The building consisted of a ground floor and one story.



From one side it looked upon the road, and from the other into the court-yard, where were cocks and hens amusing themselves on a dunghill, a grunting pig in a corner, a cart-shed which, instead of housing carts, was filled with planks, empty casks, and agricultural tools. On the hot roof a cat slept, quietly coiled up ; the robber sparrow was hopping to and fro ; while a big girl in a short petticoat, washed near a cistern, her strong brown arms soaked to the elbows. In the background a curtain of poplars, a kitchen garden, a pond and three ducks ; in the corner a Siamese game and arbours for Sunday amusement, the whole lighted up by the beams of the sun. Such was the aspect of the inn-farm of Montcornet, where Mustel resolved to stop ; and such is the appearance of nearly all farm-houses of that description.

Walking into the yard, our traveller was not a little surprised to see there a very neat post-chaise, from which an ostler was unharnessing the horses, whilst another servant unstrapped some cloaks and bags fastened behind. What was passing in the hall of the ground floor was quite in harmony with the court-yard scene. The inn-keeper was lighting the fire and preparing his saucepans, whilst his wife, in a hurry, plucked a couple of young fat pigeons ; and the servant in a corner was shelling—if we may be allowed to make use of a well-known comparison—green peas as tender as the morning dew, throwing them, as she proceeded, into a soup-tureen of blue earthenware.

In short, the whole house was in a commotion at the arrival of the traveller or travellers which the chaise had brought. Little attention was therefore paid to Mustel, who, having left his conveyance at the entrance of the

village, arrived as a pedestrian, simply followed by a boy who carried his luggage. He asked, nevertheless, the innkeeper for a room, which was given ; and, as he was hungry, he stopped in the hall, and ordered at the same time a pigeon with peas, requesting that, whilst he took a walk, it may be served on the table of one of the arbours in the garden.

Curiosity, the first sin of Eve, is also one of the first amusements of a traveller. Ours now and then turned his head, to interrogate the windows, searching for this or those travellers just arrived. We may confess that he rather looked out for a she, because a mantilla in the last fashion, left behind in the carriage, could only belong to a lady—and to a young one. But nothing appeared. Mustel proceeded at once towards the table, which had been prepared in the mean time ; but, instead of for one guest, he found it laid for two. But his perplexity was soon over, when the waiter said to him,—

“If you please, sir, that table is intended for the gentleman and lady, Number Three,” pointing out, with a gesture, the apartment inhabited by them. “*Your* table is here,” motioning him to another table in a neighbouring arbour.

There was then truly a lady, just as Mustel had thought. But, after all, what consequence was it to him if there *was* a lady, or *none*, in that inn ? He sat down with that just-enough reflection, and, leaning his elbows upon the table and holding his head between his hands, he began, in looking at his plate, to dream.

Our past often takes advantage of those rapid moments of thought uncalled for, to pass in review before our eyes

and we would not venture to affirm that Mustel, five minutes after he sat down, was not deeply lost in the farthest and purest years of his childhood, because at his age youth is not only becoming obsolete,—it is dead, except for the remembrance—that temporal immortality.

He was drawn out of that self-contemplation by the noise of voices, which, approaching nearer and nearer, recalled him to the present.

He raised his head. A young gentleman and a young lady who could not see him, hidden as he was by the foliage, turned, whilst conversing, their steps towards the neighbouring arbour. Evidently they were the proprietors of the post-chaise.

The gentleman, dressed in an elegant travelling-costume of a brown colour, possessed a pleasant face. He had passed his right arm—looking smilingly on her—above the shoulder of his female companion, having thus the appearance of leaning on her. His left hand was half hidden in the pocket of his breeches. He had thrown a little backwards the diminutive sword which gentlemen then wore, scarcely as long as the skirts of his coat. As regards the young lady, muffled up in a mantle of lilac silk, she walked on gently, looking chiefly at her pink nails, finishing that part of her toilet with the aid of a little golden dagger.

The lady seemed not to have more than twenty-two years of age. Of the freshest rosy hue, her complexion passed by gradation, just as we find it in handsome miniatures, to that of the whitest of lilies (thus would have expressed himself the poet of her period), a nose slightly *retroussé*, arched eyebrows, bright eyes full of

tenderness, but a little sensual, a high forehead, hair rolled up and powdered, a carmine mouth, the teeth white as snow, a dimpled chin ; nothing was wanting to make of that handsome face the prettiest, the most roguish of faces, and as attractive a physiognomy as it is possible to imagine. But, nevertheless, at the corners of the mouth two or three nearly imperceptible wrinkles betrayed some passing pain.

This lady must have wept, must have suffered. On her brow was left the seal which never entirely passes away, and which the heart's suffering leaves there, even when it has departed from those whom it has visited, just as if it were thus to recognize them later, and have a right to spare them as sufficiently tried, or to strike still harder, inured as they are to pain.

Calm and health can reflourish on the face, but in life the stamp of grief is indelible. You in vain throw flowers upon a grave, so to cover it, that it may not be seen. It is none the more hidden because of your flowers. The first breath, in passing over it, would certainly expose to view some angle of the marble, some word of its inscription.

To return to human nature, this lady was what we call a well-made woman, finely grown, graceful waist, high-arched insteps, white and rounded arms, the bones of wrist and ankle small and delicate,—in brief, all that constitutes in form a pure beauty. But, in addition, there was something naturally bold, something even provoking, in the face of this lady ; and now you see her just as well as did Mustel.

She was sitting in front of her companion, crossing her

little feet under the table, and satisfied with her hands, to which she gave a last glance, she offered them across the table to the young gentleman, who kissed them, after which she spread her napkin over her knees ; and, taking freely out of the dish one of the two winged birds, she exclaimed, cheerfully,—

“ I am starving ! ”

“ Faith, and I too ! ” answered her companion, following her example ; and the noise of forks began.

“ What a beautiful picture ! ” murmured Mustel.

And, in fact, it was a charming one, without taking in account a sunbeam glancing across the leaves, dancing and sparkling upon the decanters, and rebounding on the plates and the cloth.

As we might expect, the mantilla soon fell from the head and shoulders of the young lady ; and, dropping from one side of the chair, a dog, who was familiarly begging for his share of the repast, soon pulled it entirely down, trampling it in the dust.

“ Those are lovers, or I am greatly mistaken,” said Mustel to himself.

“ Some one is here,” whispered the young lady.

“ So it appears. Look ! ”

Gently she unclosed the branches, and saw Mustel quietly eating his pigeons.

“ An unknown face,” said she, sitting down again.

“ It matters little. Remain in your place, and let us talk of our affairs.”

“ Two whole days to go to Paris ! ” resumed aloud the handsome girl, laughing to her companion. “ But, at least, we should find our apartment ready.”

"I should think so. More than a month since I wrote to Tiberge."

"Tiberge!" repeated aloud Mustel, with a voice full of surprise.

"Our neighbour spoke, I believe?"

"Yes, he repeated the name of *Tiberge*."

So saying, the young man rose; and, holding his napkin in one hand, and, with the other, putting aside in his turn the branches, he looked at Mustel, who likewise, rising on seeing him, came from one arbour to the other.

"Sir," said he, bowing with courtesy, and regarding him and his companion with curiosity, "I have to ask your pardon for having been so indiscreet as to repeat the name mentioned by you, and thus to mix myself up with your conversation without having the honour to know you."

"You are already excused, sir. No doubt you know Tiberge as I myself do, and, hearing all at once his name pronounced, you were unable to restrain your exclamation."

"On the contrary, I do not know Mr. Tiberge."

"Then I do not understand."

"But the name of Tiberge is well known, since—"

"Since what?"

"Since Abbot Prévost's book."

"Do you know Abbot Prévost, sir?"

"I know *him* at least much better. He resides habitually in Holland: it was also there that he wrote his famous book."

"What book?"

fore could well believe that we had left, and, in consequence, were lost to the world. In fact, I thought so myself; but, fortunately, the letter I had addressed to Tiberge produced the desired effect. This faithful friend went to see my father; begged, beseeched, succeeded, and at once flew to us; and, two hours before the anchor was weighed, handed the forgiveness of my father to me, and also to Manon her pardon. We were already on board the ship. My father seeing that last proof of love to my beloved one, and that my passion was unchangeable, and fearing that he would in consequence lose me for ever, became moved, and consented that we might live together, but on the conditions not to reside in France, and that I should pass one month in the year with him: he added to his consent a yearly income of 12,000 francs—quite sufficient for us, who had been so cruelly tried. You may well imagine our joy. We threw ourselves in each other's arms, and I left only to see and thank my father for his kindness. I returned a month after, and then began the most charming life imaginable. We travelled; we sought for adventures, but quiet ones, which comfort heart and soul—a necessity after all those we had experienced.”

“And now?”

“Now we shall return to Paris.”

“To settle there?”

“Yes.”

“But what will your father say?”

“Alas! my father died suddenly. Paris is therefore no longer shut up for us, and Manon desires so much to return.”

"And you are married?"

"Yes."

After some instants of reflection, Mustel, looking with interest on the two young people, replied,—

"You are wrong to return to Paris."

"Why?"

"Listen! I am old, and I have experienced the sympathy which I have for you; and my desire to see you happy imposes on me the duty to tell you all I believe. Do not take offence at it: your history has made much noise, and particularly after the publicity given to that horrid book. You would, therefore, find there many painful souvenirs on one part, and, on the other hand, invincible prejudices. You have suffered too much; there exist too many living proofs of the past to permit you to be completely happy. Believe me, do not go to Paris."

"You are right, sir," answered Manon; "but we must, nevertheless, settle somewhere. We cannot constantly travel. Where, then, shall we go?"

"Oh, there, I have a good idea!" cried Mustel. "Will you do something original?"

"Speak out."

Mustel rubbed his hands, pleased to have had such an inspiration. For a philosopher curious as he, the idea was indeed not a bad one.

"Will you go with me?" replied he.

"Where are you going to?"

"Do you cling to a large town?"

"We only resolve not to leave one another."

"You, sir, would you be sorry to have as serious a



friend as Tiberge ; and you, madam, a charming companion ? ”

“ No, certainly.”

“ And such an one as, probably, would not be found anywhere else.”

“ And where are those two marvels ? ”

“ At Brunswick, in Germany.”

“ And you call them ? ”

“ Paul and Virginia.”

“ Those of Bernardin de St. Pierre, because, if I have not read my life, I have read theirs. Then they are no more dead than we are ? ”

“ No.”

And Mustel told them the object of his journey.

“ Thank you, my dear sir,” then said Manon, “ but we cannot accept.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because,” she added, laughing, “ virtuous as we are become, those people are either too virtuous for us, or we are not sufficiently so for them. And, besides, I fancy that Miss Virginia, or, rather, Madame Paul, with her strict principles, cannot be always very amusing ; and the austere Mr. Paul, that son of nature, would rarely give us any amusement. Who knows if, in knowing who we are, they would even receive us ? After all, and after reflection, I do not think that our four existences are designed to be united ; they emanate from too many different points. Paul and Virginia are delightful in a book, but I doubt much that in reality it would be the same. I have not sufficiently cast off my former nature ; something is left it which I would keep—the gaiety, the liberty, and the

*laissez-aller* of life. I could not take any other style whatever for any one, and remain natural; I should scandalize those two chaste souls. In short, we should be tired of being there, and sincerely so: life is not long enough for us to get weary for even one day. What do you think, Desgrieux?"

"I am also of the same opinion."

"You are really two children," replied Mustel, who got more and more anxious to unite those four types together—a meeting so interesting for him. "Paul and Virginia will adore you, and just for the sake of your nature, sincere in her expression as theirs is in a contrary one. But what gives you any reason to believe in the strictness, in the self-sufficiency, of their virtue? If you only could know what Bernardin has told me of them, if you would have read the charming letters they wrote, you would worship them in advance, and you would, like me, long for their friendship. Why constantly consider virtue as severe? She is indulgent; she must be such—that is even the first condition of her existence. I tell you that you will be delighted to have gone to Brunswick. Besides, you might try it, and, having no fixed object in view, go at first there. If you should find yourself tired, you are always free to go somewhere else; but, I repeat, you will thank me for having given you such advice."

"They will not understand our love, so different from theirs."

"Quite a mistake! Because your love for the Chevalier is just as sincere as that of Virginia for Paul; and a proof of that is that it lasts as profoundly as ever, another proof being that, had you died, as Abbot Prévost says, he could

certainly not have survived you. Between the two loves there is only the difference of education, and one is to the other what the exacting necessities of towns and civilization are to the quiet lessons of solitude and nature. In Paris, in your position, with the principles there professed, both of you between the temptations of the world and the opposition of a family, you could not love otherwise than you did, giving each to the other such proofs of love as two generous hearts can give. Paul and Virginia, amidst relations consenting to their love, could, without the least obstacle, unite their hearts, she having no temptation to overcome, and he no opposition to contend against. Having, one and the other, only the lessons of nature, they felt none of the needs which northern civilization imposes : they could sleep on the same mat, walk barefooted, and think themselves sufficiently adorned whenever Virginia had a flower in her hair. Thus educated, living in that manner, could they love otherwise ? Educated like them, you would have loved just the same. Your two loves are of the same nature, of the same family ; they are brothers, only, meeting at first, they would no more recognize each other than would twins who, separated since their childhood, find themselves again together, speaking a different language, but in which, nevertheless, they can tell each other the same thing."

"Perhaps you are right."

"Right ? Why, is not the result there to prove it ? After having undergone your trials, as Virginia suffered hers, do I not behold you married to the Chevalier, as Virginia is to Paul ? You are no longer Manon ; you are Madame Desgrieux."

"There, again, my dear sir, the position becomes perplexed."

"Why?"

"I am not the wife of the Chevalier."

"How is that?" said Mustel, turning round to Desgrieux, with a voice of reproach, but kind and friendly.

"Do not accuse him," Manon hastened to reply; "he would marry me. It was I who would not permit it: the intention was to me sufficient. Our love, notice well, was a spontaneous one, the movement of two free hearts one towards the other, and not the result of a family convention. If Desgrieux desired a conjugal life, he would need another love; in that case, it is *not me* whom he should marry, but a girl of his own class, whose past may be a guarantee for the future. My repentance is a true one, perhaps you may say a thorough one, but it is nothing less than repentance, and where there is repentance there must have been a fault. Now the failing of one may one day draw from the other reproaches, and reproaches when they are indissolubly united."

Mustel, deeply affected, pressed the hand of Manon.

"If," continued Manon, "Desgrieux wished to marry me, so as to redeem the past, and to introduce me into fashionable society, that would have been a piece of folly which he would have one day bitterly regretted. A woman is not reinstated merely by a name. Will he make the world forget my captivity in St. Lazare, my contact with loose women? No. Besides, what enjoyment would that world offer to us?—to what purpose give them any right over us, when we wish to ask nothing from them? Our love is in ourselves, and nowhere else. Loved

by Desgrieux, I possess the rehabilitation to which I have a right to pretend ; scorned by him, I am the most contemptible of women. He only yielded to that argument. Besides," added Manon, laughing, "I would have it so, and what I desire he desires."

"You are an angel, Manon !"

"In the mean time ?" objected Mustel.

"In the mean time, you wish to say, I am called Madam Desgrieux, but that is simply for convenience sake on the journey. We cannot tell our history to every one, and the name of wife meets all possible observations."

"But what we say now, Mr. Mustel," continued Desgrieux, "is between ourselves ; and if we go to Paul and Virginia we must be thought married."

"At first ; but when they afterwards love you—and they will love you quickly—have the same confidence in them as in me, and they will not love you *less*, trust me. I only desire your happiness, and I take charge of it."

"Truly : *Alea jacta est*, as Cæsar said."

"He would have done well to give it in French," said Manon, laughing.

"That means to say, that we accept."

"Well, so be it ; all is settled about Paul and Virginia, and let us be off."

Desgrieux wrote to Tiberge his present intention ; and Mustel, the Chevalier, and Manon rolled gaily away in the blue chaise.

Bernardin de St. Pierre was right in saying that Brunswick was a charming little town. Imagine to yourself a cluster of houses with slender gables, with red roofs, mingling pell-mell amongst poplars and elms. Nearly all

those houses are kinds of Swiss chalets, encircled at their base by a climbing vegetation which scales them without effort, creeping in their cracks, laying hold on their wooden balconies, and cheerfully brightening up their windows. Nothing could be more gay, more tranquil, more poetical.

At mid-day the gables shining in the bright sunlight, one side illuminates the street, whilst the other seems to sleep in a deep and refreshing shade. Everything takes then the beloved aspect of the colourist, from the window-blinds of brilliant stripes to the flowers in their great china vases symmetrically ranged upon the balconies, and the yellow, white, and blue handkerchiefs which, with all sorts of garments, are, since the last week's washing, suspended on cords to dry in the open air. Part plaster, part brick, part wood, those houses show outwardly all the mystery of their simple construction of brickwork, wood, and plaster, which forms an exterior not only without stiffness, but, on the contrary, full of harmony even for those eyes the least accustomed to them. If you arrive at the dawn of day, you seem to see a town built in the clouds. Indeed, its foundation lost in the blue-tinted vapours which the soil exhales, its foot hidden, it has the appearance of being cradled in the air. A little river, as polished as steel, transparent as a mirror, calm like sleep, serves itself as a girdle, and, after having closely followed the outline of a pretty town, suffers the end of its flowing stream to lose itself between two small green hills in the distance. If surprising that town in its morning slumber, at the hour when the birds alone are awake, when the sun announces itself but does not yet appear, one then under-

stands all at once that German dreaminess, different from all others, ever uppermost in the reveries of the world, and to which our most poetical landscapes in France could neither give a frame nor a shelter like that of Brunswick. Innocence, goodness, and love must germinate there as the daisies in the ground. Happiness exists there without difficulty ; virtue without a struggle.

The little children, all flaxen-haired, all rosy, all bare-legged, with naked arms, look like little wandering angels, who ask, smilingly, their road back to heaven. They roll in the dust and in the dirt ; they are sometimes literally in rags ; but they have a grace, a charm, which our children in the villages do certainly not possess. Handsome girls even amongst the most humble, with true eyes, robust arms, and strong, well-made bodies—men with thoughts in their look, with gentleness in their whole demeanour, with a sweet and communicative friendliness in their speech, cordiality, health, and heartiness—that it is with which eye and mind are agreeably struck at your first steps in that little Eden. That, travelling over the world, Paul and Virginia should have selected that place, so as to give them back, if not the immensity, at least the loneliness, the poesy of their native land, is no longer, since I have seen it, a matter of surprise to me ; and if I had to select a retreat, or to advise a spot wherein to soften pain or to invite happiness, it would certainly be there.

“ Ah, what a charming country ! ” cried Manon.

“ It is here where I would take you to.”

“ Is it here where we shall reside ? ”

“ Yes ; because this is Brunswick.”

“ But it is paradise ! ”

“Yes, indeed!”

And, jumping down from the carriage, Manon, applauding, began to look round.

After the great passions of life, the heart, and particularly the heart of women, finds itself again young, even childish, just as in summer, after the most violent storms, one finds in the inundated field, amidst a general devastation, a bird singing upon the trunk of a tree.

After having installed his two companions in an inn, —where they did not stop long, desirous as they were to walk freely about after that confinement in the close chaise—Mustel began his search for the house of Mr. and Mrs. Paul. He had no trouble in finding it: the young couple were well known in the town.

If you ever go to Brunswick, alighting from the railway, turn to the right, and you will cross a little bridge thrown over the river of which I just now spoke to you; you will find yourself in front of a charming house, standing in a garden, with a terrace, the roof covered with tiles, white walls with wooden trellis-work, windows surrounded by foliage, sculptured balcony, the sculptures interlaced by ivy and nasturtiums. Behind the house appear the summits of poplars and a garden closed by a wall almost entirely concealed under a luxuriant growth of clematis and hawthorn which escaped from the inside to the exterior.

It was there!

At that period the place, which is to-day occupied by the railway, was a little wood of a dozen acres; in the midst rose a house of a pale-whitish colour; its roof was covered with slates, contrary to the custom of the country.



That house bore the name of the "House of Sorrow," no doubt on account of the black and bright white blended together. It was recounted that one day a stranger, arriving in the vicinity, bought that little wood, and cut down the trees in the middle, for which he substituted that building, shutting himself up in it during six months. One morning he left, without telling where he went, and was never seen again. After six months, the bailiff received in a legal form an authorization to sell or to let the house, and to give to the poor the value of the sale; but, notwithstanding the pious destination of the money, notwithstanding the cheapness of the estate, no purchaser presented himself. The superstitious crossed themselves, passing the closed shutters and the shut-up doors, and of which already the moss, that ruler of solitude, stopped up the chinks.

What mystery had that house concealed? What pain, what remorse had its founder brought there? What fresh resolution had removed him from it? What was the destiny he had found elsewhere? Such were continually the questions formed at Brunswick, to be never solved. By degrees the building had been allowed quietly to work out its legend, and was no longer thought of. We relate the fact without intending to give any explanation, nor even any surmise on the subject, because it is not the history of this strange tenant we write, of whom we know nothing.

When Desgrieux and Manon, as we just said, arrived in Brunswick, that house still existed, always either to let or to sell. They saw it deserted, mute, decked with the splendour of summer; in brief, in all the conditions of

solitude and comfort in which they desired a house. The flowers, the shrubs, the grass which grew at random, the sun which shone upon it, the birds which were in no way troubled in their love-making, the sprightly hedge of hawthorn and mulberry trees which encircled the little park, the luxurious vegetation, the rambling brambles,—all around had such a striking charm on the imagination of the so newly arrived, ignorant of the superstitions attached to the place, and even little disposed to be frightened by them.

Waiting for Mustel, and whilst the servant undid the portmanteau and bags, and arranged the rooms, Desgrieux went to the bailiff, who was pointed out to him as the only master of the estate. They went together to look at it. It was impossible to find anything better. The interior was even sumptuous; furnished luxuriously. Nevertheless, the dwelling needed some repairs.

Desgrieux came to terms with the bailiff; ordered them to be done, and withdrew, delighted with his acquisition. The moment he put his foot outside, he perceived Mustel, who came towards him.

“Come quick, my dear baron; it is only you and madam we are waiting for to sit down for dinner.”

And the rector, showing Paul’s house, said, “We are going there; look at it!”

Desgrieux, raising his eyes, saw two charming heads of husband and wife, smiling in the midst of the leaves surrounding their window, and making to him, as well as to Mustel, all sorts of friendly signs with their hands.

Desgrieux smiled, bowed once or twice, and hastened his steps. Manon, dressed in white, quite charming, was

waiting, and ready to set off; they therefore went at once.

"My heart is beating," said Manon, as she passed the threshold of Virginia's house. "Wait a little, Mr. Mustel. I did not think that to enter the house of a virtuous lady could cause me such emotion."

Virginia herself came to the door to meet them. A retreat was not longer possible.

Both ladies, each dressed in white, walked mechanically, as in spite of their will, towards each other; although the elder, Manon, tended her forehead to Virginia, and when she received the kiss she asked for, not able to resist the movement of her heart, she threw herself into the arms of the young lady, saying, "Thanks, many thanks, madam!"

That first emotion passed away as it had come, not understood in its cause by Virginia, who only saw in it the true expansion of woman to woman; but it was better understood by Mustel and Desgrieux.

"I present you my wife," said the last to Virginia; and in the untruth he expressed there was an intonation full of love and respect for Manon, whose soul had just given a fresh proof of nobility.

Paul took Manon's hand, pressing it just as cordially as he had done that of Desgrieux.

Paul was twenty-two, and Virginia wanted but a few days of the same age. The one, whilst growing more vigorous and plainer, became a man, but one would have always found out again in him the Paul traced by Bernardin. There existed still that noble, confident, and open air, that slender, tall figure, those fine eyes, shaded

by long black lashes, and of which the fire was drowned in an inexpressible mildness, that same aquiline nose—a sign of energy, of courage, and will of his own ; only a black beard, the same colour as his hair, encircled his manly face.

The uncovered neck with the collar of the shirt turned down, dressed in a white vest, a large shirt and pantaloons,—the use of which had begun to spread over to France,—wearing a large straw hat, Paul, when he was walking out in Brunswick, had even the figure and aspect of a planter of the Isle of France. By study, by reading, through the contact with civilization, his physiognomy had gained some severe lines, which added that imperishable mark which the man, educated as he was face to face with nature, preserves on his countenance, and which stamps an entire and peculiar seal on his physiognomy. Throw happiness, and its natural result, frank gaiety, over the whole, like the sower who throws the seeds of flowers amidst those of wheat, and you will have the portrait of Paul as we find him again at that period.

As for Virginia, the transformation, at first less obvious, was much greater, particularly regarding the soul. A youth, becoming a man, changes less than a young girl becoming a woman and, above all, a mother. You will find in her face certain lines which alter in no way her beauty, and, without prejudice to her youth, but which changing at the first apparition of real life, excludes abruptly the dreamed one.

“Virginia was only twelve years of age ; her figure was already more than half formed ; long, fair hair graced her head ; her blue eyes, her coral lips, shone with a

tender radiance on the freshness of her face ; they were always smiling in concert when she spoke, but when she kept silent her natural turning towards heaven gave them an expression of feeling, and even of slight melancholy."

Thus Bernardin painted Virginia when she was twelve.

After the portrait of Virginia given by Bernardin, our reader has only to follow the years, the different emotions they bring with them, and he will not need me to picture how Virginia looked at twenty-two years of age. She had grown taller ; her hair no longer fell on her shoulders, but was gracefully turned up ; her eyes had still a tendency towards heaven, but they looked now often down to the earth, where played two children, whom God had sent to her. The coral of her lips still shone, but somewhat paler, or if they do ever recover their former splendour, it is beneath the kiss of her beloved husband ; for she has known love, and although purified by her innocence, and sanctified by marriage, she has known it with all the ardour of a youth developed under a tropical sky. The passion of her heart, if it has given more radiance to her eyes, has, perhaps, in exhaling, rather dried the carmine of her lips. Her face was invested with new tenderness : she knows now what she formerly only dreamed. Her figure is still graceful, notwithstanding a slight *embon-point*. Nature, in giving her the happiness of becoming a mother, was naturally obliged to add also the power necessary to support it, and increase that young bosom, from which two hungry beings drew their life. In short, it is no longer a beautiful girl, but a handsome young woman whom you have before your eyes, with all that

progressing nature is able to bequeath to her of the young girl.

Now, is Virginia happy? Yes. Still her eyes have already shed tears: she saw her own and Paul's mother die. It is true they died smiling, giving their children a rendezvous in an eternal world, saying to them, "God does not separate, He unites; we shall await you." But they are nevertheless dead; that is to say, she was obliged to part from all the happiness, the love, the joy, the living remembrances of her youth. I am no judge of what is called sorrows, if those are not real ones. Be, therefore, no longer astonished if now and then a pink line, telling of easy tears, encircles the eyelids of this young woman when her eyes meet the picture of the past. In the mean time, as there are never clouds so heavy as not to dissolve finally into the infinite azure of the sky, so is there also no grief, great as it may be, which may not be effaced in a pure heart full of sincere religious feeling. Add to it the unceasing consolations which two loving hearts can give to each other; for nature looks more forward than to the past; for Heaven leaves not places empty long. The little chairs of children have replaced the grandmothers' arm-chairs, and the new-sent angels have filled up the life of those flown away. But what would it then be if, instead of four, six might yet sit round their table? Therefore, happy as Virginia is, she could be still more so; whilst there was a time when that could not be.

"Thanks, many thanks, madam," resumed Manon, sincerely, "for the reception you give me. I feel a most tender friendship for you; may I have one day the opportunity of proving it to you."

Mustel and Desgrieux, understanding the real meaning of those words, pressed at the same time the hands of Manon.

“May we not embrace the children?” asked the rector of Paul, who, approaching the window, called Paul and Virginia, who were playing on the grass among the flowers. At the loved voice they raised their heads, and set off running, to see who first would arrive to receive the paternal kiss. Paul, the elder, naturally stronger and nimbler, would have arrived before his sister, had he not voluntarily given up, and, taking her by the hand, he presented himself at the same time as her. Each of them received the caress which they looked out for,—a parent’s love, visible expression of an invisible Providence, which divides itself unendingly, without losing anything of its unity.

If Bernardin had had to draw a portrait of those two children, he could but have repeated what he had already said of their father and mother. Never was transmission of soul and of face more direct, more striking. As for them, they looked with that pleasing mien of infantine surprise on the two strangers who were there, and sympathetically held out their little hands and asked to be embraced. Manon pressed the little girl strongly to her heart. One would have said that, pressing her thus, she hoped to retain in herself something of their frank innocence. One hour before that visit, notwithstanding the emotion which she already felt, like a presage of new impressions, she had no idea of the happiness which could be found in embracing a child. How many surprises life preserves for the heart of woman! Manon felt her heart

oppressed without being able to account for it ; she felt it, that was all. Hers was a nature too sensitive, too delicate, to be able to approach a life like Virginia's, without feeling a shake unknown to her, but from that to analyzing her feeling it was still very far. The most perfect instrument vibrating beneath a clever hand, does it understand the mysterious harmony which draws from it sounds which it knew not it possessed ? and what is woman save an instrument of the most unlooked-for sensations ?

They sat down to dinner. The impressions of Mustel, of Desgrieux, and especially of Manon could not form the subject of a general conversation. They would have been almost tarnished, introduced so speedily, and such as they showed themselves. On the other hand, those were not things to be served up at once, dressed, prepared, and seasoned, like the dishes of the meal around which the five guests were actually assembled. Besides, unless with long preliminaries, Paul and Virginia would not even have understood them, ignorant as they were of the past life of two of her guests. The journey, the sojourn in Brunswick, the House of Mourning, news from France, and of Bernardin de St. Pierre, who was really worshipped in that family, and of how he lived, formed the topics of that first talk, and which, towards the end of the repast, brought all minds back nearly to the same point.

At two o'clock Paul arose, asking his guests to be allowed to attend to his daily duty. In fact, Paul, unfit for idleness, had created, notwithstanding his fortune, a career honourable to himself and profitable to others. He had studied medicine, and, joining to general study the



particular science of some natural and beneficent secrets in which, by his first education in the colonies, he had been initiated, he found himself to be an excellent physician. Every day he visited his patients,—in the main poor people. Virginia completed his work, assisting the needy. It would be almost trivial to say, in speaking of her, who says Virginia says charity.

Mustel accompanied Paul. Desgrieux went to place workmen immediately in his little house. Manon and Virginia remained together. Thus those two living proofs of two loves, so characteristically opposed, found themselves united in common daily life. What would be the result of that strange junction ?

The two ladies sat down beside each other in the room to which the flowers and the lowered window-blinds gave freshness and perfume ; the whole past of the one, spreading itself gaily around her, forcibly detached her companion from hers,—in fact, during one moment, Manon was permitted to forget.

“Now,” said Virginia to the children, “we are going to read” ; and, turning round to Manon, “if it does not tire you too much.”

“Quite the contrary, madam, it will be a great happiness to me, this spectacle of blessed family life.”

“Do not call me any longer, madam ; are we not destined to live together ? Why should there be any feeling of timidity between us ? Why leave to time to effect by degrees a good thing which can be done immediately ? Let us love one another at once, and let us talk together like people who love each other. Is not that, too, your opinion ? And now quick, Master Paul, let us begin.”

In opening the book Virginia showed the child the place where he should read ; but before, "Where did we leave off yesterday?" asked she.

"At that moment where, after the tempest," answered, without any hesitation, the interrogated child, "you and papa found your trees entirely destroyed, the birds flown away, and the flowers beaten to the ground ; and then you were very grieved."

"Quite right."

"Dear little angel !" said Manon, affected by the accent, full of grace, of an inexpressible charm, in which the child has told his little story, "come, that I may kiss you once more ;" and clasping the head of the child in both her hands, she pressed it strongly against her lips.

"Go on ; read now," said she to him ; and Manon became all attention to this peaceful occupation.

The child, with that hesitation of young understanding beginning to comprehend, read then the following lines,—

"In sight of that desolation Virginia said to Paul, 'You brought birds here,—the hurricane has killed them all ; you have planted that garden,—it is now destroyed. . . . All perishes upon the earth : it is only heaven which never changes.'"

"Is it that, mamma?"

"Yes, little dear."

On that Virginia kissed her son and daughter ; the latter, being only at her A B C, beheld with artless admiration her brother reading an interpretation of an assemblage of letters still mute for her.

The child resumed,—

“ Paul answered—‘ Why can I not give you something out of that heaven ? but I possess nothing even on the earth.’ . . . Virginia continued, blushing,—‘ You possess the portrait of St. Paul.’ Scarcely had she spoken than he ran to his mother’s hut to fetch it. That portrait was a little miniature representing the hermit Paul. Margaret was very devout when a girl : she had worn it a long time hanging round her neck ; afterwards, becoming a mother, she had put it on that of her child.”

“ Mamma, show me the portrait of papa.”

Virginia drawing the miniature, with which she never parted from her bosom, held it for both the children to look at and to kiss, of whom one was turning to resume his reading, when drawing his head close to his mother’s, as if he would kiss her, he whispered, “ Mamma, pray look !” and with his eyes he showed her Manon, motionless, her look fixed, and her face bathed in silent tears.

“ Oh, what is the matter ?” cried Virginia, rising.  
“ You weep.”

“ Oh, it is nothing, madam ; let me weep : weeping does so much good at certain moments, and to some souls ; besides, who would not weep at the sight of a mother teaching her child to read in the book of her own life ?”

And Manon added, almost whispering,—

“ God has done well to refuse me children—to me whose life has been equally written.”

Virginia had heard only two or three of those words, of which besides she would not have been able to understand the meaning. Manon, tranquillizing her with the hand, and fearing the ridicule and even the danger of

such a scene if prolonged, endeavoured to smile, saying to her,—

“Continue, I beg of you, madam. I have never been so happy as I am at this moment.”

Virginia was going to resume the course of the lesson after having tenderly pressed the hand of her new companion, when, rising suddenly, the latter cried out, answering doubtlessly some inward thought of hers,—

“No ; it is impossible : it is much better that I should leave this house. Good-bye, madam, good-bye ! Pardon me for having entered here ! ”

And Manon ran towards the door.

Virginia seized her hand.

The fact is that Manon literally felt herself suffocating in that atmosphere of innocence and chaste remembrances. She was like the curious traveller who, having climbed a mountain and passed into the clouds, desires still to continue his ascension, and, feeling then his veins swollen, had just but the time to return to the air to which God has condemned him.

“You shall not go out,” said Virginia : “you conceal something from me. This is not merely simple emotion ; it is grief, and I am a judge of that. It is impossible that I should be unable to console you. Tell me your pain ; you could not pour it into a truer friend’s heart.”

During that time Virginia brought Manon back to the place which she occupied before, and, embracing her affectionately, she turned to the children, the astonished spectators of a scene even more incomprehensible to them than to their mother,

"Go and play," said she, to them; "we will resume our lesson later." And now we are alone, let us see, dear Manon," said Virginia, and pronouncing that name without knowing what it recalled, "now let us see; and tell me what is the matter."

"Oh, no, madam, no; allow me to leave! I repeat, it would be a great deal better."

"You are a child! Dry your tears, get a little calm, and tell me in what manner I could have given you pain; because there was only me here. You arrived joyous; it is therefore myself alone who could have caused you sorrow."

"You? good God! you, sainted and good as the Holy Virgin? No; you have only done me good. But alas! as to me, there is a pain even in the good done me, because I do not merit it. Since I have passed the threshold of the room I have a weight upon my heart. Manon, the friend, the sister of Virginia! Can God allow such profanation? Vice and virtue side by side; paradise and hell under the same roof!"

Virginia looked around, understanding nothing.

"I have told you a falsehood," continued Manon. "I am *not* the wife of Desgrieux. I repent: there is some good left in me. But I was no more worthy of his name than I am of your friendship. Mr. Mustel knows all that. I was afraid to come here. It is *he* who has encouraged, even forced, me to do so. Pardon, madam; I did not know that your most simple actions would be to me as so many deep reproaches. The voice of this little child entered like a dagger into my soul. Then I said to myself, 'What business have you in this house—you,

Manon Lescaut?' Therefore, I promise you, I will leave it, because my presence stains it, and I should tarnish your soul if anything in the world could tarnish it; but, before I leave, I insist that you know who I am. Perhaps you may find me worthy of your pity—the only sentiment I merit."

Over-excited even to an exaggeration of remorse, Manon threw herself down at the feet of Virginia: there she wept a long time, without being able to speak. At last she began to tell the history of her life; and Virginia listened to it with indulgence, sustaining her with a word, encouraging her with a smile. Manon confessed everything, the good as well as the bad: she neither placed herself higher nor lower than she deserved, and arrived at the last words of her recital with a voice nearly calm and a soul less depressed.

"Now, madam," she added, with accent of noble humility, for no longer was there any falsehood in her, "you see the distance which separates us. I thank God that He enlightened me even from the first day. I have loved, I love; but I have suffered. I repent, and perhaps the future may obliterate the past. In the mean time, I must atone for it obscurely, far from those who have nothing to expiate."

Virginia, raising up Manon, said to her, radiant with that right of pardon which God gives to pure souls,—

"Thanks for your confidence. What greater proof of friendship could you give me? Let me say so to you, Manon. You are a noble woman. Your faults are the faults of the world in which you have lived; my virtue is

that of nature which has educated me. If those who have not erred have real strength, it should serve to assist, sustain, those whose steps have tottered. I do not pardon, because I have nothing to forgive ; but I esteem and love you. Blessed be the threshold which a repentance like yours has crossed !”

“ Oh, Virginia ! ”

“ Embrace me, Manon, and call me your sister. Just now I desired it ; but now,” added Virginia, with a smile, “ I insist on it.”

“ But, my sister, the heart of women contains indulgences unknown to the just severity of men. When Paul shall learn who I am ? ”

“ Do you believe that the son of Margaret,” interrupted Virginia, “ that he, the child of an illegitimate love, could be so rigorous a judge ? Do you believe that Paul is the man to insult his mother ; and would it not be to punish her fault, were he wanting in indulgence for *those* which you may have committed ? Rest tranquil, Manon : Paul will tender to you his hand, as I do my arms.”

With a shriek of joy Manon threw herself into the arms of Virginia, the visible image of sincere repentance casting itself upon Christian pardon.

As for Virginia, approaching the window, with a natural and quiet voice she called,—

“ Virginia, Paul, come up, dear children : we are going to read.”

The following day, Paul, Manon, Mustel, and Desgrieux meeting again, there was affectionate shaking of hands—a proof that Manon had told everything that had happened

the day before to Desgrieux, and Virginia to Paul. The two young people, if that was possible, were even better received than ever ; and Paul said to them,—

“ You are here at home ; for from to-day you belong to the family.”

Even the children’s caresses, without doubt by a recommendation of their mother, were more tender than usual.

In the mean time Mustel had not forgotten his letter for the young gentleman called Goethe, the friend of Bernardin de St. Pierre. Mustel was fond of movement, like all those who, during thirty years of their life, have constantly done the same thing, and in their older days see themselves forced to look out for that necessary agitation which their youth never had.

He therefore asked Paul if he did know Goethe, and if he was in Frankfort, as Bernardin de St. Pierre had told him.

“ His father is a Councillor of State, and their name well known over Germany. He, in fact, resides in Frankfort ; but his son—and it is he with whom you have to do—is just now in W——, about fifteen leagues from here. I do not know him personally, but I have heard that he is a young gentleman who likes solitude, study, and work. W—— is on your way ; in passing through it, you will know if he is there. So much the better if he is ; we shall meet sooner again.”

Mustel consequently left.

Paul had been right ; young Goethe was in W——, Mustel inquired after his residence. It was a small, isolated house, surrounded with a hedge so low and easy



to pass over that it proved the utter confidence of the tenant.

Goethe at that period might be twenty-one years of age. He was tall and slender; German in the entire poetical and distinguished acceptation of the word, with a deep and rapidly searching eye, beneath a glance full of good nature, though a little satirical; hair well planted, rolled up according to the style of that time, but nevertheless free; cheeks thin, and in no way promising that fulness which they should possess one day; a hearty and, at the same time subtle smile; the physiognomy a little haughty: such was the future author of 'Faust,' when Mustel was presented to him. Goethe had only his white waistcoat on, and that even unbuttoned; his breeches were of a slight greyish silk, like his coat, which he had taken off on account of the heat, so as to be more at his ease. Goethe, we say, was stretched out upon a sofa, chatting with a young gentleman a little older than himself, and to whom the visit of Mustel, because it stopped their conversation, appeared anything but agreeable. Goethe's friend had an air easily recognized, at the same time, of a man entirely absorbed by one sole thought—a handsome young man, with his tall, slight figure, his black hair, his pale complexion, his well-arched brows, small but brilliant eyes beneath his forehead's arch, with his straight nose, his proud mouth, his white teeth, and his cheek-bones slightly coloured, doubtless through the animated conversation he had just had. He held a whip in his hand, and was dressed in a riding-costume, that is to say, short breeches, with little boots with spurs, the dress of a dark colour. He rose, on hearing Mustel announced, and like a

man without curiosity, indifferent to any conversation but to one in which he was occupied. He held out his hand to Goethe, saying,—

“Well, good-bye! I will come again to see thee,” with an accent which expressed, “I wish this gentleman far, far away!” Upon which he bowed to Mustel, without looking at him, and went out. Two minutes after, the gallop of a horse, and a second farewell called from the road, gave notice of his rapid departure.

As soon as his friend went away Goethe rose, put on his coat, excusing with a gesture and a smile the dress in which he had been surprised, and offering a seat to the rector, he said, in a soft and sympathetic voice, “Sit down, sir, and please to tell me to what I owe the honour of your visit.”

Mustel then drew out of his pocket the letter which he had brought, and handed it to Goethe, who, looking at once to the signature, exclaimed,—

“Bernardin de St. Pierre! Oh, how happy I am to hear of him!” And he read rapidly the letter, smiling at it, just as if the face of the poet had shown itself amidst the words.

“You are a friend of this great man?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Accept my congratulations, for one cannot be an ordinary man to be the friend of such a genius.”

“I said the same to myself, whilst coming to see you,” said Mustel, smiling, “to bring you that letter.”

“That is a compliment returned to me,” replied Goethe, laughing; “we will share it between us, and let us say no more.”

As he frankly expressed himself, Goethe could not see an ordinary man in the gentleman whom Bernardin de St. Pierre called his friend, and particularly his professor. And, for his part, after what Bernardin had told him, and what he saw now for himself, Mustel knew that he had to do with a man who would descend to posterity. They arrived, therefore, immediately at the familiarity of chosen intellects, who cannot afford to lose their time in the common formalities of life, and who only demand, to act uprightly one towards the other, and to come quickly to the point.

Ten minutes after his admission Mustel was installed in Goethe's room like an old friend. First it was of Bernardin they talked—of his labours, of the philosophy of his works, of the friendship, the esteem, the admiration which both the speakers had for his character and for his talent. Afterwards, attracted by the easy language, by the rapid but delicate and just glances, of the young man, as by the new horizon which an imagination like that of Goethe could add to those of art formed already, Mustel desired ardently to advance the intimacy, and to make acquaintance with that family of the poet called his works. Goethe had not yet published anything, but after having listened to him a quarter of an hour one could feel that he was surrounded by an active, noisy world of his own,—perhaps still, it is true, in a dreamy state, but in which one ray, or one slight thread, was only needed to draw Mustel within it also.

“And, without being indiscreet, what are you going to do in Germany?” asked Goethe, just in the moment when he was going to be questioned himself.

The professor related to him the cause of his journey itself, as well as the occurrence of the day before.

Goethe showed no surprise. Mustel even thought for a moment he had not been understood.

"Paul and Virginia, Manon and Desgrieux, united a few miles from here, living together, loving each other,—do you comprehend the strangeness of such a fact?"

"Yes," answered Goethe, just in the same tone as that in which he would have replied "Yes," if Mustel had said, "The sun shines."

"You seem, nevertheless, not much surprised?"

"Thank God, nothing astonishes me much now."

"Bernardin said truly that you are a philosopher. Well, on that account you must make the acquaintance of our heroes, Desgrieux and Manon, Paul and Virginia."

"God forbid!"

"You do not wish to know them?"

"I will not see them."

"Why?"

"Because they are not worth the trouble!"

"They are charming."

"Nonsense!"

"But I assure you of it."

"You are dreaming. They are vulgar; they are common; in fact they live, they eat, like the lowest peasant. They will grow stout; they will sleep after dinner, and will have rheumatism."

"Like every one."

"That is what I reproach them with. They are just like every one else: that is a right I do not admit for them."

“What would you like them to do?”

“I will answer you in the words of the poet Corneille’s old Horace, only in the plural, ‘Let them die.’”

“Poor children!”

“As for me, I know but *one* Paul and *one* Virginia—those of our friend Bernardin; *one* Manon and *one* Desgrieux—those of Prévost. All four are dead, except Desgrieux; and he, too, disappeared at last in a vague ending which looks much like a tomb. They have been killed by the poets. I have wept over them. I have found their death just, indispensable, poetic, providential. Every individual bearing their name is an impostor or an idiot: he will only be in future awkward and degenerate. Is it not so?”

“That goes a little too far.”

“However that may be, I will not know them. The real ones would spoil to me the false ones—much more real than themselves.”

All this tirade of Goethe had been accentuated with all the shades and all the intonations of jesting, but jesting philosophically—a laughing mask, under which one finds a serious face.

“But I would then ask you why you live,—you, with such theories?” replied Mustel, laughing.

“I?—I have a right to live; no poet has killed me. I have served as a type to no one. If one pronounces my name it is not to present passion, or pain, or love. Goethe,—that signifies nothing; I have, therefore, a right to live. And, besides, I have something to do in this world. I have to look at the follies and passions of mankind; I also have to create types. I have my work to do.

Let Manon, Virginia, Paul, and Desgrieux write a book as charming as that to which they served as a model, and I will forgive them. No—otherwise no.”

“You are pitiless.”

“Pitiless!” cried Goethe, getting more and more excited, without, however, withdrawing from the conversation the gaily ironical intonation by the aid of which alone it could long be kept up.

“But would you be so for yourself?”

“What do you mean to say?”

“I say that if to-morrow you felt such a passion as that of Paul, and in the same conditions, would you die if your Virginia died?”

“Yes; but I am sure never to feel such a passion.”

“What can you know about it?”

“I have other things to do. There are people expressly made to experience passions; there are others to paint them, and I am one of those. I ask only one thing of God,—that is, to send me a great, a mortal pain unknown till now, and I will make of it a masterpiece.

“I will shut me up with it, and I will kill it, as it would, perhaps, have killed twenty men. Why? Because I will thus write it; I would force it to pass from my heart to my brain, from my brain to my pen. It may be consumed—worn out in that passage—but the last word once written, I would be consoled, without taking into account that, whilst so communicating it to my readers, and they having thus felt its effect, I should have divided it infinitely, and each one of them would have shed a portion of those tears which, without that resource, I should have been forced to shed by myself, and which

would have suffocated me. Then, when I should have before me the skeleton of my so subdued passion, of my anatomized pain, I would hang it up in a corner as a curiosity, and, with the aid of remembrance, that moral galvanizer, I should, in the interest of art and philosophy, whenever I wished, make all its muscles and all its springs play, and the public would say, 'How true it is!'

"The man possessed of art or science becomes insensible; he reflects like a mirror, but has no more feeling than it. A physician, the best son in the world, if he is seized by the devouring need of study, and his father were to die of an unknown illness, what would he do? He would mourn for his father; but he would open him, to search out the ill—to reveal it, so as to preserve posterity from it; and he would have done a noble and sublime act.

"Never has a man of genius died of love—I mean, of moral love, because the other killed Raphael. When deceived by his wife, Molière, your greatest poet, suffers: he composes 'The Misanthrope,' that is to say, a masterpiece; and the following day, consoled, he could recommence, and write laughingly, 'Mr. de Pourceaugnac.' For my part, to say the truth, if I was a woman, I would never love a great man, and particularly a great writer. Because he has depicted love, she would believe him capable of feeling it, and she would require him to show towards her what he had so well described. She cannot know—and she will find it out too late—that that love, so well depicted, has worn out, like real love, the heart of her lover,—that she has in his creations themselves rivals, eternally preferred to her, and that if she suffers

from the love she feels, and dies in consequence, her lover will write a book, embalming her in immortality, and then will pass on to other things. For the first writer in the world, the most beautiful woman on earth will be but a fancy, or, at the most, a moral study; and thus all is for the best. No serious love for real thinkers; no serious work for the true lover. Ah! I do not deny it; I even know that the soul of an artist can be inspired by a woman, but on one condition, that this woman should remain a dream—a desire—as Laura was to Petrarch. Ideal love is genius; but as the poet loves with his imagination, he will be disenchanted when he touches reality. Whatever may be her love for him, never can the woman, once belonging to him, mount to the height he dreamed of; and as she can never get him to descend to her sphere, since he has wings and tends to arise, nor can he take her to the upper regions where the air can be breathed only by him, he will be forced to let her drop, and she will wound herself mortally in her fall. A man of genius must have three women in the course of his life: one fair, delicate, ethereal, indiscernible, for his dreams when he is twenty years of age; one gay, active, careless, for his pleasures when he is thirty; one tender, maternal, thoughtful, to nurse him when he is old. Few women understand this truth; and when one of them loves a great man, she just asks him for the only thing he cannot give her. Imagine a woman loving Shakspeare, and loved by him as his heroes love—love sombre and melancholy as that of Hamlet, burning and fatal as that of Romeo, jealous and mortal like that of the Moor of Venice. Ah! unhappy one, what would become of her, if a man of



such a genius were to take it one day into his head to love a woman with all the force of his powerful nature? Should he conceive the idea to pour out on her his every thought, his entire life, she would fall thunderstruck at the first apparition, like Semele, when she wished to see Jupiter such as he was. Genius is an eternal Jupiter, who consents now and then to transform himself into a swan for a Leda, or in a golden rain for a Danaë,—to take a form not according to the love he can feel, but according to that of which the woman is capable. Let women be satisfied with that, and in their own interest not ask more of us."

Goethe had said "us."

He began to laugh.

"I said 'us,' " he began again, "because myself, too, I have been carried away by my dreams. Well, I do not retract: you may think of me what you like."

"I think of you as Bernardin thought of you, young man, when he told me that you would go far."

"Yes, if God allows me sufficient time to give a form to all my ideas; and," added Goethe, with confidence, "He will give it to me." Then he resumed, more calmly, "Let us return to what we were saying just now—that death in youth, in the midst of illusions, at an age when one believes in everything, where one dies smiling, where one finds life beautiful, is often preferable to an existence which, from deception to deception, from pain to pain, leads you definitively to the same death.

"Stay! Just guess what I was saying when you arrived."

"How can I?"

"I was advising that young man who was here. You saw him?"

"Yes—a tall and handsome young man, who seemed even rather annoyed by my visit."

"Well, I advised him—and he is my best friend—to return home, to load his pistols, and to blow his brains out."

"You gave him such advice as that?"

"Yes."

"He is very wretched, then?"

"He is the happiest man in the world at this moment."

Mustel looked at Goethe.

"Yes," said he, with a grave voice; "you are a philosopher, but your philosophy, sir, is a terrible and fatal one!"

"You understand it, nevertheless?"

"Yes, I do."

"You understand, then, that this man, who has just met with the greatest happiness he could ever hope for, has henceforth no other chance but disillusion, regrets, remorse; and for him that chance is a certainty. It would therefore be wise to die to-day: to-morrow it would be too late."

"In the mean time he will not follow your advice."

"He will take good care not to do so. Man is only strong against misfortune: in the face of happiness he is a coward."

"Life will have little charm for you, do you know?"

"I know it well; therefore I will create my own joy for

myself, and it will not be the least of them to write the history of my friend. Ah, it is a ready-made book, and I assure you it will be an interesting one."

"And you think that this man will be unfortunate?" said Mustel, curious to know the history of this unknown.

"In less than a year he will be the most wretched of men; so much the more so, as he will then have no longer the courage to die—a courage which he had not eight days ago, for it is not yet eight days since he wished to kill himself. Listen to this letter, which he wrote last week to the woman he loves, and who resisted him till then."

Goethe, drawing a paper out of his drawer, read aloud,—

"‘The die is cast, my dear Charlotte. I am resolved to die, and I write it to thee calmly, without any romantic transports on the morning of the last day I shall ever see thee.

"‘When thou readest this letter, alas! my dear friend, the cold tomb will already cover my inanimate remains; and this so tender, so wretched heart, which revives at the gates of life, fixes with emotion its last thoughts upon thee. I have passed a terrible night—but no, it was a beneficent one; it was that night which encouraged, which decided me to die.

"‘Yesterday, when leaving thee, struck by an inexpressible anguish to succeed the extreme agitation of all my senses—the horrible and freezing embrace of despair—I could involuntarily gain my room. Out of my mind, I threw myself on my knees, and God deigned to grant me yet the relief of shedding tears. A thousand ideas, a thousand projects, contended in my heart, but finally the

only and inexorable thought of death remained. I lay down; and in the morning, in the half-calm of my awaking, I found again that *one* thought repeating to me with force, 'You must die!'

" 'When, on a fine summer's eve, thou shalt ascend towards the hill, remember thy friend. Remember how many times thou hast seen him come forth from the dale, and then cast thy eye on the grave-yard which encloses him, and see how, at sunset, the evening wind agitates the thick grass which covers him.

" 'I was calm on beginning my letter, but now, overcome by all these ideas, I weep like a child.' "

After a while, Mustel asked,—

" How did that letter come into your hands? "

" Have I not told you that this young man is my most intimate friend, that he does not hide from me even his most secret thoughts, and wrote me letters in about the same sense. Two days after having written this one to Charlotte he came to see me, and, giving it me to read, he said, laughing,—

" 'Canst thou believe that I intended to kill myself? Was I mad? ' "

" Why did he not send it to Charlotte; that is, if I have not mistaken the name of the lady? "

" Before sending it to her, he resolved to see her yet once more. He found her alone. He was very agitated, and she seemed to be much affected. For some time past she had noticed his manner to be very strange, which frightened her. She never had given him the slightest hope, but also never, as a faithful wife, a tender mother, had she ventured to question herself as to the real kind of

affection she felt for Werther—that is my friend's name. You can guess what that interview must have been. They could not restrain their souls; she was moved by fearful forebodings—he on the point to die. They were alone, and solitude in such a case is a bad counsellor. They read a chant of Ossian,—of course, one of the most gloomy and the most pathetic. It will be for me, when I write the book, to find one well in harmony with the situation. Charlotte shed those sweet tears which grand poetry calls forth when it penetrates a noble soul. Werther fell at Charlotte's feet, seized her hands, and pressed them to his brow and to his eyes. A man on the point of killing himself is not always master of himself; therefore I pardon him until then. Charlotte, at that unexpected silent outburst—the first which Werther had allowed himself—felt all her forebodings revived. Strongly moved, she pressed her hands against her throbbing bosom, and, bending down to him, their cheeks met. The world disappeared for them. Werther, encircling her with his arms, clasped her in a rapture to his heart. She escaped at last, but too late. Drunk with love he returned home, and found that letter.

“That or never was the moment to accomplish his project. Before that scene it was, perhaps, only egotism; but after, it was the duty of a man filled with a serious and profound love, the duty of an honest man and of a generous heart, to prefer to a doubtful happiness the sure happiness of his beloved one. Werther did not understand that; he remembered but one thing—the avowal of a love so long buried in the depths of her soul, and which Charlotte, in the midst of her trouble, had allowed to

escape her. He remained suspended above death by the kiss he had received ; he clung to hope ; he lived—that is to say, he acted as a coward ! ”

“ You are very severe.”

“ Ah, no ; for you do not know all. The purity of that love is impossible ; its happiness is uncertain, whilst the terrible and fatal consequences are only too sure. Charlotte is married to a man whom she loves, and who adores her ; she has a child, of whom one day she must deserve the affection and respect. In living as Charlotte’s lover, Werther destroys everything—the chastity of the conjugal home, the tranquillity of her he loves ; he violates the hospitality of a friend ; he betrays the hand he shakes ; he forces the child to scorn one day his mother, that is to say, he robs Charlotte of the love of the entire second period of her existence ; he condemns her to a life of mystery, falsehood, and remorse. ‘ To be loved by Charlotte, to hear her say so, and then to die ! ’ has he often written to me. Well, that dream is realized. Charlotte has confessed to him her love ; he has received from Heaven what he asked for, and does not give that which he promised : he fails in his word. Not only is it the act of a dishonest man that he has not understood that necessity, but it is also that of a fool, not to have understood the voluptuousness of death in such a moment.”

Mustel looked at Goethe.

“ Just the same thing,” he murmured

“ What do you say ? ”

“ I say that I hear you repeat very nearly what I heard from the mouth of Bernardin de St. Pierre, and that such unanimity on the subject of death is strange.”

"It is natural ; it is unavoidable for the poet, for the philosopher, for the thinker, and for the friend of truth. Abbot Prévost kills Manon, Bernardin kills Virginia, and I—I shall kill Werther !"

"How so ?"

"I shall kill him in my book," added Goethe, laughing. "I shall make use of all his impressions until his last visit to Charlotte; and there, stripping him of all vulgar passion, I shall make him follow the advice I just gave him. The mass of the people will cry out at the exaggeration. Most of my readers will say, 'In his place I would have lived'; and nearly all would finally think as he did himself. But I should have written, if not a true book, at least a great philosophical study. I should have taught a lesson, and left a type; and serious understandings—and those are the only approbators I am ambitious of—uncovering themselves with emotion before the corpse of my hero, will exclaim,—

"That is a man of heart, who, having in his hands the existence and the honour of three persons, has sacrificed himself to keep it to them, and who, having it in his power to make a chaste wife an adulteress, preferred dying, to leave her pure, and to cause her a grief over which time will triumph rather than a remorse which time would have but increased. That was a man of sense, who, having brought close to his lips the cup of impossible voluptuousness, has just drunk as much of it as the lips of man could do ; but he has piously made of the rest a draught of death. He was a Christian, who, having not been able either by religion or by reasoning to triumph over his passion, preferred to kill his body,—

that is to say, the material nature, which contained that terrible passion, just as one breaks a vessel containing a violent poison in order that that passion should hurt no one ; and thus he would return to God innocent of the triple harm which he could have done in this world 'That is no longer a suicide, but a sacrifice ; it is no longer a crime, it is a holocaust ; and Charlotte, saved, can keep without shame and without fear the remembrance of this man in the depth of her heart. That remembrance will even prevent her in future from all similar dangers ; and when, on a fine summer eve, as he asks in his letter, she ascends the hill, it is a friend's and protector's spirit which she shall see coming out of the valley ; and, directing her eyes to the cemetery, and seeing that the evening wind moves the thick grass, she can smile to him, and weep over him, without any one having a right to be jealous or irritated by her smiles and her tears. Every time she bestows a caress on her husband, every time she embraces her child, she will thank Werther, and the soul of the dead, wandering incessantly around her, will take away, as a consolation, the perfume of the good he had done.' That is what those will say to whom in reality my book will be addressed. And now, sir, with your hand on your conscience, knowing what I know, foreseeing what I foresee, would you not have given the same advice to Werther as I did just now ?"

Mustel reflected some instants.

"Yes, perhaps," said he ; "but only in the situation as you present it ; and it might be the only one in which suicide is admissible."

"But, nevertheless, take care, young man. To advance



such theories is dangerous. If they fall on ordinary intellects, they will not be understood; and exalted imaginations will exaggerate and falsify them. They are of those magnificent sublimities which touch only the edge of truth, and which must be preserved within the domain of art, or they may mislead those who hear them, and may determine souls to have recourse to suicide who might have found comfort in the future."

"My philosophy is that of age and experience; yours that of youth and genius. Take care, therefore, not to allow it to go too far, nor to erect into a principle a sophism against the decrees of God. Yes, you will with that grand idea make a beautiful book; but you open to the disenchantment of mankind a still closed door, and which it would be, perhaps, better rather to shut more securely."

The convictions of Goethe were not to be shaken by a reasoning even as true as that he had just heard, and, happily, nothing could prevent the great philosophical thought which ruled him—came to dawn in the book, which every one knows, and which, as Mustel foresaw, gave to some vulgar contemporary exaltations that strange mania of suicide. As for the professor, he returned to Brunswick strongly impressed by this strange young man, and promising to himself to study him more and more.

A month passed, a month during which those five existences, which hazard had united, seemed to get drawn daily more and more closely together, and to sympathize more and more with each other. Life had become, if we may thus express ourselves, a life in

common between the individuals whom we know. Only Goethe continued to live apart; but Mustel went to see him frequently, and each time he returned more and more convinced, having received in confidence the plans and ideas of the young man, that Germany might flatter itself that it possessed in him one of the greatest of future poets.

At Brunswick not one day passed without seeing Paul, Manon, Virginia, and Desgrieux united. The house of mourning had put on a holiday air, and, if not in the house of the one, they were ever to be met with in that of the other. Virginia and Manon—the latter, copying the former, had become a woman for housekeeping and family life—sat during the early mornings in the garden side by side, where they chatted, busy with embroidery, amidst the merry sports of the children.

Manon seemed to have no greater pleasure than that of herself making their little white-and-pink summer dresses, to clothe them in them, to mend them when they were torn, which was constantly happening. The two little ones had ended by considering her as an elder sister, and Virginia might for a moment have been jealous of the caresses which her friend received. Each day entrusted quietly to the following day all those easy, simple, and merry existences, and the whole little colony enjoyed a happiness without example, judging by appearances. And why should those appearances be deceiving? What could be hidden in those hearts, of which some had never lied, and the others certainly would have blushed at the least untruth? The soul most burdened with errors could not bathe thus in an atmosphere of candour, love, and serenity without completely purifying itself.

Paul continued his work of daily benevolence. Mustel translated into German the books of his beloved poet—books which he would have liked to translate into every language, and to spread over the whole world.

Desgrieux alone was without any settled occupation. Sometimes he walked out with Paul; at others he read with Mustel. He often wrote to Tiberge, who was astonished at his metamorphosis. At other times he read to Virginia and Manon whilst they worked. By degrees the days were becoming short; they had then to think of creating indoor occupations. There was every evening a family meeting, for they were indeed now but one family. I assure you, time passed quickly. Mustel chatted with Paul; Virginia, Manon, and Desgrieux played music. The children played in the next room; or their parents amused themselves in getting them to represent little pantomimes, such as they themselves represented in their childhood. This life had an inexpressible grace and cordiality. Often, too, the piano was mute; the chairs were ranged in a half-circle around the hearth, where a winter fire already sparkled; the children, quietly sitting on cushions near the talkers, listened at first, but soon dozed off beneath caressing hands. Then the talk ran from end to end of the circle, forming, as it were, a bouquet of all the thoughts, of all the impressions, of all the recollections, of all the dreams which each contributed without effort—a bouquet which was then divided, and of which each retained a flower. Had a stranger entered just then, and one had said to him, "Of those two ladies, one is Virginia, the other Manon Lescaut; guess which is Manon, and which Virginia!" he would have been

greatly embarrassed, and certainly would have been mistaken, for there was no longer a Manon—there were two Virginias.

Then the hour of separation arrived. If the evening had been spent at Desgrieux's, Paul gave his arm to his wife, carrying the two laughing and chattering children on his back, shook hands with Manon whilst she was embracing her friend, and the charming group, accompanied to the door, set off on the well-known road by the soft light of the clear moon.

Well, let one month or six weeks elapse, and we will look in again. It is midnight. Manon and Desgrieux are at the gate of their garden, giving their last good-bye to the friendly group which, having left them, is disappearing now in the shade. They enter their home.

Left alone, Desgrieux and Manon draw close one to the other. The Chevalier, as formerly, clasped his beloved one in his arms, and said to her, with a voice trembling with that emotion which doubtless young love always gives to the voice,—

“Tell me that you love me, Manon!”

“Yes; I love thee, my Chevalier! Dost thou not know that?—dost thou doubt it?”

“No; but I am so happy to hear it again and again. Look: thy love”—and, in speaking, Desgrieux, in spite of himself, let appear in his voice a sort of slight disquiet, untouchable as the shadow of a cloud, but, nevertheless, an uneasiness—“thy love, I tell thee, is my life, is my happiness—yes, my happiness, my only possible happiness in this world. What would become of me were I to lose thy love? Repeat to me, therefore, that thou

lovest me, often—ever ; and even that will not be sufficient ! ”

“ How ! thou sayest that to *me*, Desgrieux ? ”

“ I say it as I think it, with force, with tenderness, with gratitude ” ; and he pressed Manon in his arms.

Manon was on the point of repeating to the Chevalier what also she had said to him so often,—

“ Repeat to me that nothing can ever separate us ; that a love like thine occupies a whole life, and that the woman who loves thee knows all the highest bliss this world can give ; that thou wouldest have followed me to the end of the world, condemned, infamous, tarnished as I might be, and, if I died, thou wouldest die.”

Why did she remain silent, instead of speaking, and just at the moment when Desgrieux begged her to talk to him incessantly of her love ? Nevertheless, they smiled one to another. But how was it that their two smiles got separated,—that the hands of Desgrieux loosened,—that the looks of both the lovers grew fixed, as if each of them had followed a new thought, and that to these words, which formerly would have immediately been sealed by the most tender proof of love, succeeded now a reverie in common, yet so apart ?

“ Of what art thou thinking ? ”

“ And thou ? ”

“ I know not ; of a thousand things, of nothing—of the past, the future, and of *thee* particularly.”

“ And I the same.”

“ Good night, my darling Manon ! ”

“ Good night, my love ! ”

And, after embracing tenderly, they separated, and

went to their different room. But what is extraordinary is that neither of them seemed to perceive that strangeness, that abrupt and voluntary need of solitude.

But they did not sleep after separating ; and if you could have penetrated into Desgrieux's room, you would have seen him during an entire hour walking about, without thinking of his bed, the prey to an agitation which, once alone, he no longer gave himself the trouble to conceal. He even spoke aloud words without any coherency for those who might have heard them, but for himself joining from distance to distance the threads of one continuous thought.

He opened his window to breathe the cool night air. But all at once, as if a smiling image had passed before his eyes, he became silent, in order to see it the better, and to smile to it in the distance ; but soon that smile faded away, having no one to receive it.

This night was renewed on many following ones. That solitary agitation had become for Desgrieux a habit, almost a want. Could Manon have heard him walking and talking to himself ? Certainly ; her room was only separated from Desgrieux's by a partition. She heard him, then ? No ! She slept, probably ? Still less. Often, even very often, Manon, her lamp alight, her head resting on her hands, her elbow on the pillow, remained awake, silent. But such a silence is a noise greater than all other noises, so much so, that had a cannon been fired off by her side, she would not have heard it. At times also her face brightened, but with a smile very different from that of Desgrieux ; it was as it were a smile which Manon addressed to herself—a smile free

from pride, but reflecting a secret joy, such as may possess deep pain, a pain, for example, felt by the self-sacrificing heart. One would have said that the soul of this woman grew continually nobler, and that nothing more could be expected from her on this earth than forbearance for those passions which she herself had known. Her very speech had acquired therefrom a grave poetry, which she certainly little thought she should one day learn.

Thus, one morning, talking with Virginia, who had been relating to her a happy dream, adding that she had never yet had a bad one, Manon said,—

“I am convinced that during the night the soul, imprisoned the whole day in the body, leaves it gently to wander a little in liberty. It is then she abandons her earthly prison to that momentary death which is called sleep—a real death, since life is then without memory, without impressions. Once free, the soul visits the beings and the objects she loves, communicates directly with them ; because distance no longer exists for her, and when she returns she brings back news of them to the spirit. Thus come happy dreams, thus the comfort and consolations we receive mysteriously, and without palpable proof on the part of those whose absence or death we mourn. Sometimes also in her nocturnal wanderings, in her occult investigations, in her invisible communications, a coming misfortune is revealed to her ; and since nothing separates her longer from sensation, neither the energy of the body nor the power of reasoning, she feels so severe a shock from this warning, that for shelter she quickly re-enters the body, which by the abrupt return awakes startled. Thence result the causeless terrors and fore-

bodings of which reality proves later too fatally the truth. Then when the soul is guilty and cast off by conscience, she no longer dares to leave the body ; she is ashamed to show herself, and she clings to the creature. Thence the sleeplessness of remorse, which finds no longer peace, except when, by repentance or death, she succeeds in separating or violently turning out that soul from the body which she agitates. Thus it is, Virginia, that you, who have a pure soul, have only happy dreams."

A visible change had likewise taken place in Desgrieux, but in a quite contrary sense. At their evening meetings when he was addressed he started, and the smile with which he excused his absence had something nervous and constrained. Mustel and Paul watched him attentively when he least thought himself observed, and both tried to explain the cause of that alteration. Sometimes he would leave the sitting-room abruptly, and go to shut himself up in his own room. One day Paul followed him there.

"What is the matter with you, my friend ?" he asked him, affectionately.

"Nothing, my dear Paul—absolutely nothing. Do not pay attention to it. I am as nervous as a woman : it is ridiculous, is it not ?"

And Desgrieux endeavoured to laugh.

Paul no longer insisted, but withdrew sadly.

"What is the matter with the Chevalier ?" he asked Manon.

"Nothing, my dear Paul," answered Manon, with the most natural tone of voice. "He is liable to nervous



attacks. Then he likes to be alone; otherwise you can easily imagine I would go to him."

Paul seemed reassured. Mustel looked at Manon. The calmness of the young woman surprised him much more than the agitation of the Chevalier.

"There is something strange happening here," thought he; "it would want Goethe to guess it."

"If the Chevalier is subject to nervous attacks," added Virginia, artlessly, "Paul could cure him. It is very bad, even dangerous. He has already healed a poor creature of that illness in this neighbourhood, and he was of a much weaker health than Desgrieux."

Manon looked at Virginia, who, in finishing that phrase, returned to her basket for some wool, to continue her tapestry; and, taking her head in her hands, she embraced her tenderly. One might have thought that it was from gratitude.

That evening they retired rather earlier than usual. Mustel, full of thought, went up to his room; and Manon, in passing, knocked gently at Desgrieux's door.

"It is I," said she in her sweetest voice.

The door was opened.

"Well, dear, how art thou?"

"Quite well, my good Manon. It is nothing, be not uneasy, but go to your room."

And the Chevalier completed this answer with a kiss; he then looked at the young woman with a tenderness mingled with affection, as he repeated,—

"My good and dear Manon!" and he embraced her again.

Manon scarcely breathed. Any other woman in her

position, a prey to the emotion which agitated her, would have fainted. From whence could she, the incarnation of weakness, have drawn that marvellous strength?

At that instant Virginia and her husband passed the window of Desgrieux's room, who slept on the ground-floor; the window was open.

"Good night, friend!" said Virginia, whose light-coloured head became visible.

Desgrieux trembled at this voice, and, turning around abruptly, he pressed his lips on the hand offered him.

"Good night, dear friend!" said Paul, in his turn; and he also stretched his hand, shaking that of the Chevalier, who shuddered.

"Take good care of yourself," added Virginia. "I leave him to you, Manon. Good-night, till to-morrow!"

Voice and woman were lost in the obscurity. Desgrieux, forgetting that Manon was there, stopped at the window.

Manon opened the door, withdrawing silently; but the current of air shook the window, and Desgrieux turned round.

"Why dost thou leave me thus, Manon?" he said, with an accent of reproach, which in truth was rather addressed to himself than to her.

"Didst thou not tell me, dear, to go to my room?"

"Well, then, till to-morrow!"

"Good night. If thou needest anything, call me?"

"Thanks, dear child. I have Marcel. Sleep well."

Manon went to her room, but not to bed: she seemed to expect something.

At the end of about half an hour, she heard a noise as

of timid footsteps: it required all her attention to catch them; next a door was opened cautiously, then another one; but in the vast silence of such a night nothing could be done without awakening an echo. When she heard the door opened which leads to the garden, Manon arose in her turn, and went out of her room. At the same instant he who went out opened the little iron gate of the garden, but carelessly, like one who thinks himself too far from any ear to be heard. Manon, having found all doors open, had reached the steps in a second, and saw Desgrieux turn to the right, and walking with a rapid pace in the well-known direction.

His little dog followed him, frisking between his legs. The dog was a charming little animal, which Virginia had given to Manon, and much loved by Desgrieux.

Manon remained upon the perron, motionless as a statue.

"Poor Desgrieux!" she murmured, at the end of a few seconds of reflection, and shaking sadly her head; "poor Desgrieux!"

How handsome Manon looked at that moment, with her pale face, her half-open mouth, her eyes raised to heaven, and of a mother-of-pearl brilliancy, like that which the moon sheds down on the night, her hair falling down her cheeks, and her body wrapped in a large dressing-gown of brown silk, leaving exposed her neck and arms—a neck and arms round as those of the ancient statues, but of a more tender tone in the half-light of the pale night.

In the mean time Desgrieux had stopped near the

house of Virginia—a house silent and tranquil. Not a ray of light stole through the well-closed shutters; and that calm, that silence, was so intense, one might have said that from that house surrounding nature took its impulse. Desgrieux, leaning on the railing, let his head drop on his hand, bathing his agitation in the coolness of the night.

All at once his little dog, which had been scratching at the door of the house to which it came every day, and had run back to its master's side, as if astonished that no one opened it, began to bark.

Desgrieux raised his head, and perceived at the end of the street,—that is to say, at thirty paces off, for the street was not long,—a shadow walking directly towards him.

“Be quiet, Mounda! be quiet!” said Desgrieux to his dog, but it continued barking.

The comer doubtlessly had recognized the dog, for he called out, “Mounda! Mounda!”

The dog discontinued barking, and set off towards the person who called her, and at whose feet she turned on her back, as if to ask pardon for not having immediately recognized him.

It was Paul.

“What! is it you, dear Desgrieux?” said he, approaching.

“Yes; as you see, it is me, dear friend. But where do you thus come from?”

“I am returning from a patient whom I had promised to call and see this evening. But you, what the deuce are you doing here?”

"I am taking a walk with Mounda. I have not been very well this evening. I felt a need of fresh air. But now we are going back again."

"Well, good night."

"Good night, my dear Paul."

It seemed to Desgrieux that Paul looked at him with surprise; and as for Paul, he felt certain that Desgrieux was embarrassed in answering him.

Desgrieux was furious to have been thus surprised by the only person by whom, besides Manon, he did not wish to be seen. Also—would one believe it?—he felt for a moment a hatred for his dog, which, pleased and proud to have at the same time fulfilled the duty of a watchful dog, and of a grateful animal, was returning gaily home, wagging her tail with joy.

Manon, without having been seen, had returned to her room. She had seen what she wanted to see.

Every one has more or less felt the effects of that nervous irritability to which Desgrieux was, at that moment, a prey, and which causes even to the most humane man a longing to hurt some one. There was only Mounda present; it was she which suffered. At the instant the little animal entered the hall, rushing between the legs of her master, acting like all dogs, ever in a hurry to run out when within, as they are to come in again when outside, she received a kick from the Chevalier, which sent her to the other end of the passage.

Mounda in falling gave a piteous cry, and tried to run away; but she was not able to do so; the blow had been too violent, and the fall too severe. Desgrieux instantly repented of his act, and was on the point of running to

the assistance of his dog, which he was very fond of, when Manon appeared.

“What is the matter?” asked she, with an emotion caused by the painful cry of Mounda—a cry which had brought her there almost in spite of herself, having, as we know, resolved not to appear.

The emotion of pity which Desgrieux had felt was at once restrained by the appearance of Manon, surprising him thus with all the doors open. His ill-humour changed to anger, without even waiting for a provocation, and which latter would certainly not have come, decided, as Manon was, not to notice the Chevalier’s night-excursion.

“The matter is that I have beaten the dog. Have I not the right to do so?”

“Perfectly; but what wrong has she done?”

Desgrieux did not answer.

“Thou hast hurt her very much. Poor little thing!” added Manon, kneeling down by Mounda’s side, and lifting her softly, so as not to cause her any pain. “Poor little thing! she is bleeding.”

And Manon’s white hands were stained with the blood of the little animal.

It was strange, but at the same time natural. Manon, though agitated for some time by emotions which you have guessed, and which you will later understand still better, had not allowed a tear to drop from her eyes. At the sight of her wounded little dog she burst out, and the tears she shed were those she had so long restrained. She remained thus a few seconds, stooping down, with the little dog in her arms, caressing and talking to her, weep-

ing with a sort of enjoyment. She then wrapped the little wounded thing in a corner of her morning-gown, ready to carry her away.

Desgrieux felt that he was in the wrong, but still more that he was ridiculous. A man never forgives such a situation, and when he is ashamed of himself he is pitiless towards others.

"How tender hearted you are this evening!" he cried.

"Can I help it, dear? I love this little dog," answered Manon, in a humble voice, as if it were she who was in fault.

"Oh yes. No doubt; for you to live is to love, it matters little whom," answered Desgrieux; and he went in, closing the door after him, no doubt in order to escape quickly from the infamous action he had just committed, and from the rapid remorse which was attached to it.

Manon, at those words shuddered like a man who receives a ball in the chest, but who will not fall. She was stronger than the insult; her tears stopped as by enchantment: she did not even look towards the door through which Desgrieux had passed, and without a word, without a gesture, without any vulgar scenes, she seemed only pre-occupied with one thing—in wrapping up carefully her little dog,—which licked her hand, looking at her with an eye full of intelligent gratitude; and she returned to her room, washed the wound of the little animal, bound it up, and went to bed, after having made Mounda one on the foot of hers.

Attracted by the noise, and hidden by the shade of the staircase, Mustel had seen everything.

Of all the bad nights which he had lately passed, the one which followed that scene was the worst for Desgrieux.

Need we say why? Met by Paul in front of Virginia's house, at one o'clock in the morning, without being able to give a reasonable cause for that walk; surprised by Manon striking a poor animal which had done nothing wrong; having insulted the being who loved him the most in the world, having said to her things of all others he had no right to say,—what sort of night could he pass between the preceding agitations of his soul and the new reproaches of his conscience? But we must say for his excuse, that for some time he really had not known what he was about.

Twenty times he put his hand on the lock of the door, in order to go and throw himself at Manon's feet and ask her pardon, to embrace like a child that little dog whose bleeding image passed and repassed incessantly before his eyes; but he never dared to do so. He knew not what effect that scene, and particularly its *dénoûment*, had produced on Manon; he did really not know how to face the grief and the legitimate retaliations of this poor woman. He pressed his ear to the partition, doubting not to hear her sobs; but, to his great astonishment, he heard nothing. The silence of death reigned in Manon's room. Then he became frightened.

"Impressionable as she is, such a blow might kill her at once. What a wretch I am!" and, leaving his room, he entered the drawing-room, through which he must pass to reach Manon's room.

He listened again. Nothing.

"She has perhaps fainted?"



He hoped it for an instant; then, with a thousand tender cares, he would recall her to herself, and on opening her eyes, and seeing him so repentant, so tender, she would be forced to forget.

The Chevalier walked very softly into Manon's room. It was about three o'clock in the morning. The lamp still burned. Desgrieux drew near the bed.

Manon was sleeping.

"She pretends to sleep," thought he, and he stooped down over her face. It was strange, but at the same time natural. Manon, though agitated for some time by emotions which you have perhaps guessed, and which you will later understand still better, had not allowed a tear to drop from her eyes. But she slept in reality, a sleep lighted up by one of those calm smiles which prayer offered up before slumber leaves playing round the mouth of childhood. "Could it be that she did not hear what I said," asked the Chevalier of himself? "No, evidently not; if she had heard it she would not sleep."

Mounda—she had awoke. Recognizing her master, she hid her head from a feeling of terror; she recollected too well the foot not to distrust the hand which approached her. However, it was a caress now offered to her, and, sitting down upon the bed, he kissed the little animal again and again. Then she regained courage, and skipped around him to show her joy.

The shake which Desgrieux had given to the bed, and the dog's movements, made Manon open her eyes.

At that moment her lover did not see her, busy as he was with his dog. She could, therefore, examine him some time without being perceived by him.

"He has a good heart," she said to herself; and then, aloud, "Good evening, dear!"

And she smiled.

"I have awoken thee, my dear Manon. Pardon me. Hast thou forgotten my wrong-doings?"

"Oh, it is nothing!" said she, motioning with her eyes towards Mounda, for her hands were occupied by the repentant kisses of the Chevalier; "it is nothing, and to-morrow she will run about like she did yesterday."

Manon, certainly, was resolved not to remember.

Desgrieux, ignorant of the cause of this voluntary forgetfulness, returned to his first supposition—either that she had not heard, or that she had not understood, the insulting word which, in his anger, he had let escape him.

"Then thou really art not vexed with me?" said he.

"Vexed with thee, my dear Chevalier, for a movement of impatience! It is for thee to grant me a pardon, on the contrary, for my ridiculous tears."

This was too noble to be accepted without discussion.

"Is she speaking ironically?" said the Chevalier to himself. And he looked at Manon. "No; she does not suspect anything. So much the better. Well, love, and the love of woman in particular, is decidedly blind!"

Relieved of his fears, and his remorse, fatigued by his emotions, he felt no longer anything but the necessity of rest. He took Manon's hand in his, and fell into a reverie, in the midst of which sleep overtook him.

The day found him asleep, and Manon, watching in her turn, looking upon him like a mother would look at

her sick child,—just as she had looked on him from the door-step, when she murmured,—

“Poor, poor Desgrieux !”

That day they were to breakfast with Virginia. Manon and Desgrieux went there as usual, arm in arm, escorted by Mustel, who had passed the night in writing to Bernardin. There was the same welcome, the same cordiality on both sides. And why not? Not one of them possessed the secret of what was passing in the heart of his neighbour. The hour of either confidence or discovery had not yet struck.

Paul alone cast from time to time glances at Desgrieux, but stolen ones, and which crossed on the road those of Manon, studying on her side the face of Paul. The conversation began.

“I have received a letter,” said Paul, “from Mr. S——, the French minister at H——, four miles from here. His first Secretary to the Embassy has killed himself in falling from his horse.”

“Poor young man !”

“It is his mother who should be pitied,” said Virginia.

“And it is a real loss for the Embassy, for the secretaryship is a difficult office, and which this young man filled in a marvellous manner. Mr. S—— owes to him much good advice, and France some real services. Therefore, Mr. S—— is very embarrassed, and writes to me about his perplexities. Now, Desgrieux, if I was you, that would be just the place I should desire.”

“Me !” cried the Chevalier, who did not suspect that this news, for which he had not shown any interest, would terminate in such abrupt advice.

“ Yes, you.”

“ You are joking, my dear Paul !”

“ Not at all ; I speak seriously, and I will even give you my reasons. Every one, my friend, works in this world, in nature as well as in humanity. Idleness is an ingratitude towards God ; it is as if telling Him to His face that we disdain the noble and great qualities which we have received from His hands ; and God takes His revenge, for who can know how many ill weeds take root in an idle mind ? Trust a man who has worked with his hands ever since he entered this world. Labour is indispensable to the happiness of man ; it raises him, it consoles him : it matters little what may be the nature of the work, provided that some one profits by it ; to do what one can is doing what we ought. And God rewards equally the philosopher as the mason, the writer and the street-porter. Work, therefore, my friend. You will tell me that you love, that you love deeply, that love is an occupation of every instant, and that you know of none so sweet or so noble. You are deceiving yourself. Love, in the true acceptation of the word, is only an occupation of every instant, when it is surrounded with difficulties, with obstacles, with jealousies and fears, with all the passions for which, taken together or singly, a man’s life does not suffice. At such a time I understand that the idea of any work whatever would be insupportable to the mind ; it cannot even be thought of : the heart is full, and it rushes to the brain ; but, thank Heaven, you are not in that situation. Like mine for Virginia, so does your love for Manon flow on without danger, without obstacle, between the two banks of your happy life.

Manon's love for you is holy"—and Paul laid an emphasis on the word—"like Virginia's for me. No fears on that subject. You walk, your heart warmed in the sunlight. Well, then, make use of labour, so as to economize your love; give to useful occupation the time you formerly gave to emotions now dead—a time which you now no longer know how to employ. Let your intelligence be the depository of your happiness, and live on the revenue without touching the capital.

"One consumes one's heart by concentrating within it one's whole life. What sorrow, what remorse for you, should you one day perceive that you no longer love Manon as you should do, and that this calm love is become insufficient for you, whilst she will love you always, because for woman love is in reality an occupation! God has thus willed it, and in the name of that love imposes on them duties from which He has exempted us. At each phase of her life, at each transformation of her existence, it is love which is still her mission. The different loves of girl, wife, and mother result from and flow the one into the other, with a logic and a regularity which leave no room for other occupation. But it is not so with us.

"It is not for nothing that to us men, in appearance more capable of supporting every pain, God has only given the joys and the gains of paternity, whilst he subjects woman to the long and painful trials of childbirth. To this God, unless we are to be considered unjust, we owe something, surely, in exchange for the privileges He has granted to us. Towards woman, or we recognize our inferiority to her, we owe an indemnity which shall sup-

port, an example which shall encourage her, and that is this work, according to our intelligence and our force, and the love which she bestows on us ; a duty for her becomes a recompense for us. Do you believe that you love Manon more than I do Virginia ? No, doubtless. It is, besides, impossible : I work, nevertheless. The good I do may not be much ; still, though but little, I am of some use. Do you likewise : your home-enjoyments will be all the greater, and your sensations will open themselves purer, fresher, more solidly, under the shelter of work. For some time past you are agitated, you do not sleep ; you have moments of sadness, a wish for solitude ; you are impatient. You seek the cause of this evil. Well, I have found it : it is idleness. Believe a friend who loves you as a brother, and who desires, I swear to you, your happiness only, by all honourable means which friendship puts at the service of man. Besides, the work which I propose to you is a charming occupation, suitable to your tastes, your birth, your name. I would not separate you from those you love, but merely remove you sufficiently to make your sentiments return to their true place, and to enable you to understand the happiness which Heaven has given to you. I do not speak of the name which you can create for yourself in this career, and the ambition which you have a right to possess. It is, notwithstanding, something ; and that ambition will follow.

“ The town where you will reside is near here ; we can see each other nearly every day ; you will stop with us for weeks together. We will visit you, we will write to you ; and the time will pass as it should pass, rapidly, usefully,

honourably. Am I right, Mustel? Am I right, Manon? Am I right, Virginia?"

Of the three answers, all to the same effect, Desgrieux heard but one.

He was noble, generous, enthusiastic; he held out his hand to Paul.

"Thanks, my friend," said he, "thanks for your kind words. Write to your Minister that you have found him a secretary for his Embassy. To-morrow we will leave."

"That is right; that is rightly spoken. We will set off to-morrow together, and I will present you to the Minister."

"In fact, he is right. I do require solitude, to examine myself, and to explain to myself my true sentiments. And, if I am not mistaken, if what I feel is real, perhaps distance will give to me oblivion; for what I dream at times is an infamy, and, besides, impossible."

Thus reasoned Desgrieux, as he looked at Virginia embracing her two children.

"And Manon," said he to himself, "do I not owe Manon this effort, who, insulted by me yesterday, had forgiven my offence even before I asked her pardon? Yes; Paul is right."

In the mean time the other guests had gone into the garden, and Manon, approaching Paul, said to him, with emotion,—

"Yours is a noble heart; let me for once look at you and admire you as I wish."

"Dear, good Manon!" answered Paul, affectionately pressing her hand.

"Thank you, thank you!" said she; and, with down-cast eyes, she hastened away.

On coming to himself, Desgrieux perceived that he was alone with Virginia. She was looking at him.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" said she, with her charming voice, still holding her children by the hand. "Are we to stop here? Shall we not go into the garden? There are not so many fine days now; let us, therefore, take advantage of those we have. But what grieves you? You look so sad."

"It is this departure which gives me pain."

"You call it a departure; eight leagues! What would you then have said if you had been obliged to leave the Isle of France, quite alone, to come to Paris, as I was? Come, would you be weaker than a woman? After all, nothing forces you to leave."

"Oh, tell me to stop!"

"Stop, then!"

"But Paul wishes me to go."

"How do you mean—Paul wishes it?"

"Yes; and doubtless it is you who told him to send me off."

"I?"

"Then it was not you, Virginia?"

"I did not even know that Paul had received a letter from the Minister."

"Then you do not detest me?"

"Ah, now, what are you saying?"

"Yes, yes, I will go; it must be, it must be so!" and he passed his hand over his forehead,—“but on one condition.”



"Name it?"

"That you will write to me."

"I should hope so; but we shall all write to you—first Manon, then Paul, Mustel too, and then I myself. The children shall write you also, when they know how to write. But what a painful separation this is! Why, with a horse, you can be here in two hours' time!"

"And may I also write to you?"

"As much as you like. Writing to our friends is one of the great amusements of solitude."

"Oh, pardon, Virginia, pardon!"

"Pardon for what?"

"Oh, for nothing. I think I am mad."

"I am afraid so, indeed," said Virginia, laughing, walking towards the door. "But it was lucky you said that to me, and not to Manon; she would not allow you to leave."

"Yes, yes, I am mad—quite mad," murmured he. "This woman is the image of virtue. It is not eight leagues I should go, but to the end of the world. How long it is till to-morrow! Why can I not set off to-day?"

Manon, too, felt a desire for solitude. For some time past a resolution had been growing in her, and which gave her both calmness and smiles, even in sleep, even amidst all that she saw, and of which yesterday's scene imposed on her the necessity. She needed some days of quiet and collectedness, so as to make it unchangeable, and to draw it nearer to a state of performance. We, therefore, shall not describe the last hours the lovers passed together. Although each of them

felt a secret but intimate conviction that that separation of eight leagues, in appearance so short, would lead to great events in their life, neither one nor the other allowed it to appear. They embraced one another, and parted naturally, like people who may meet again in an hour's time—in fact, like people who shall be only separated by eight leagues.

Mustel remained with Manon.

Desgrieux needed, as it is commonly said, change of air. When he found himself alone with Paul in the carriage which took them away, it seemed to him that each breath of air which passed over his head carried away with it one of the thoughts which had lately oppressed him, and which doubtless required merely a little solitude and reflection to lose their hold entirely. Even from the first steps of this momentary separation he was as if struck by the impossibility of an eternal one ; and, nevertheless, he had sometimes seriously thought of it. Yes ; at certain moments, Desgrieux had actually allowed his mind to dwell on the idea—and without repelling it—of leaving Manon for ever. It is true that she was then by his side ; but now she was no longer there, now that this separation had taken place, though but for a few days, everything, every sensation, every personality, took back, as by enchantment, its signification, its reality, its place. There is nothing like withdrawing a little from objects in order to see them in their true light. When you think you no longer love a woman, go away for a short time : distance will give you the real measure of your love ; and the mysterious thread which attaches your heart to hers, stretched by absence, will either snap at once or,

contracting, will forcibly draw you back to your point of departure.

As for Desgrieux, for a moment he recollected only one thing, that he was travelling in an opposite direction to where Manon was ; and, recalling the remembrance of former separations, forced and painful separations, at once to his mind, he was filled with terror at the thought of not seeing her again ; and it wanted but little to make him retrace his steps, to run back, so as to convince himself that she was there waiting for him, and to ask her pardon for his passing folly. Never, indeed, had she seemed to him so indispensable. The reason was that it was the first time in his life that he had to make reproaches, not to her, but to himself. Another image, a rival one to that of Manon, returned through the effect of the first reaction to his mind, and, aided by reflection, he arrived bit by bit at the certitude that he was cured ; and feeling the necessity of pouring out his new impressions to some one, he seized Paul's hand, and said to him suddenly,—

“Thanks again, dear and excellent friend. That was a good idea of yours, and you cannot understand how grateful I am to you for it. If you could but know all the foolish ideas I have had, you would laugh at them as I do now myself. Oh, I will tell you all about it one day.”

And Desgrieux laughed heartily to himself. Paul considered that cordial and rapid expansion as a good omen,—he, who did not know how to doubt in the movement of the heart. He had the philosophy of happy people, a philosophy which smiles at all that is good, without going

deeper, to search for a cause. Besides Desgrieux did not dream of deceiving him : if he deceived any one, it was himself, and without being aware of it.

After having made their visit to the Minister, Paul set off in the evening for Brunswick, leaving Desgrieux in the feelings which we have just described, and taking back to Manon a letter, which contained these words only,—

“ On receiving this note, beloved Manon, get into your carriage and come to meet me again. I have a thousand good things to tell thee.

“ Thy Chevalier, who ever loves thee,  
“ DESGRIEUX.”

Paul watched Manon's face, whilst she was reading the letter, to see the signs of joy which it must have brought with it. But, to his great surprise, he saw her grow pale under an impression which looked like terror.

“ Does that letter not make you happy ? ” asked he.

“ Oh, yes, very happy. Thank you, dear Paul, thank you ! ”

And, obeying Desgrieux, she set off at the break of day to rejoin him.

Mustel, enchanted by the Chevalier's letter, said to himself,—“ Come ! that is right ; it is all over.”

He wished to accompany Manon, in order to congratulate him ; but Manon thought it was she alone whom the Chevalier wished to see. She departed, therefore, alone.

The last days of September were already stripping the trees, and the leaves which were left wore that warm rusty colour so congenial with the days of autumn. At

the hour when Manon set off on her journey, the plain was yet deserted, and the trees of the road threw forward at their ease their thick and heavy shade. The day promised to be a fine one, and the sun, which was appearing just as if he had been torn by the summits of the fir-trees which confined the view, stained the horizon in blood for leagues. There was, besides Manon, not a human being to enliven this melancholy picture, well made to aid the thoughts of the early visitor. As for Desgrieux, who had not slept, sitting upon the edge of his window, his elbow upon the balustrade, and his head resting on his hand, he looked on the dusty and still empty road by which Manon must arrive.

At last he saw the glimpse of a carriage: he guessed his beloved one to be in it; and soon, though he saw not her face, a well-known article of dress informed him that he was not mistaken.

He closed the window, and opened the door. The rolling of the carriage stopped at the house; the Chevalier stretched out his arms, and a minute later he held in them again her whom he was in such haste to press to his bosom.

"Manon! dear Manon!" he repeated, covering her with kisses, "how happy am I to see you!"

A man to whom one brought back his heart, lost for an instant, could not be more grateful than was Desgrieux to Manon for having brought back to him her love.

"I received thy letter this morning, and I set off immediately, as thou told'st me."

"And thou hast forgiven me?"

"What, my dear?"

"What I have made thee suffer lately; for thou didst suffer, I am sure of it."

"And me, did I not make thee suffer formerly? Dost thou think that I have forgotten?"

"My good Manon, ah! yes, I love thee; but thou shalt know everything."

"Why should you tell it? I know it as well as thee."

"Thou didst guess all, and yet thou forgavest! And I am not to kiss thy little feet, like those of an angel? And I should not give my entire life to thee? Where was my head even to look at another woman? No woman is worth Manon! To understand how much I love thee, I only require to be separated one day from thee. Thou knowest we men allow sometimes our imagination to interfere in the affairs of our heart; but it does the work so badly, that we come back very quickly to our senses. Shall I prove to thee that all that transient folly is over, of which I now understand nothing myself?"

"Thou sayest so—that is sufficient; why shouldst thou deceive me?"

"Shall we leave Brunswick? shall we go to some still deeper retirement? Then thou wouldst see that thou art able to replace the whole world to me."

"Knowest thou, Desgrieux, I never saw thee so excited? Leave Brunswick! and why? Dost thou fear a relapse?"

"What folly!"

"Let us there, then, stop: we will return there together."

"What! thou hast already renounced thy diplomatic career?"

"I only accepted it as a remedy: where there is no longer disease, a remedy is useless. Dost thou not think so?"

"Thou hast, nevertheless, seen the Minister?"

"Yesterday, with Paul. There is one with a noble heart! A generous soul, has not he?"

"Oh yes," answered she, with profound conviction.

"But I have promised the Minister nothing. Still I owe him at least a visit. I shall therefore stop two or three days longer; we will then return to our past life, our dear former life, shall we not?"

And whilst speaking thus, Desgrieux, holding Manon in his arms, was taking off her hood and her mantle, repeating to her in a sort of fever,

"How much I love thee!"

"Is it quite true?"

"Oh, I swear it."

Manon passed her hand across her forehead.

"What is the matter?" asked Desgrieux. "Thou seemest melancholy."

"No, my dear Chevalier; I, too, love thee."

Well, there they are now re-united; the happy Brunswick life recommencing, or rather continuing.

So much the better

And yet they say that such rapid cures, moral as well as physical, are more dangerous than the disease itself.

Let them say so; and, above all, let us leave the two lovers quietly together. We will shut the door on their reconciliation, and see what is passing elsewhere."

Mustel, not able to accompany Manon, went to see Goethe, and got to the poet's house about the same hour that she arrived at her lover's.

Goethe was working.

"Ah, it is you, my dear Mustel; you are welcome."

"How merry you look!"

"It is seeing you."

"Well, what news?"

"None. Here is autumn: that is to me the only novelty on this earth."

"And our lovers?"

"Which lovers?"

"Werther and Charlotte."

"It is ended."

"What do you mean? How is it ended?"

"Yes. Werther left three days ago."

"You see, then—"

"What?"

"That he was much stronger than you thought, since he has left."

"Yes, but with Charlotte. Oh, when a man has once entered on the path of folly, he goes on to the end; and when he is at that end, as experience is there—"

"He repents."

"No; he recommences."

"O misanthrope!"

"Not in the least. I laugh at men; I do not hate them."

"Werther, then, has run away with Charlotte?"

"Or, rather, Charlotte has run away with Werther."

"What do you mean to say?"



"I wish to say that, amidst her faults, the poor woman gave to her husband the only proof of esteem and of heart she was still able to give him. Rather than to wade on in the mud of mystery and of falsehood, between the trust of her husband and the caresses of her child, a double and a daily remorse, she has accepted the terrible consequences of her love; she has gone off with Werther."

"And what has her husband done?"

"Her husband, after having read the letter which his wife had left for him—a letter capable of killing him—for women alone possess the secret of enclosing the death of a man within the four folds of a piece of paper—her husband, after having read that letter, which shattered everything both within him and around him, folded it up again, and put it in his pocket without saying a word, after having embraced his little son, whom Charlotte, out of pity, had left him. He quitted the town, mute as a spectre, and pale like a marble. Of what is his resolution, or what revenge he will take, he is ignorant; but what I know is, that his resolution is a profound one, and that his vengeance will be terrible. There is nothing like such suffering as that to turn the gentlest of men into an executioner; and certainly Albert had the gentleness of a child,—and which naturally results from happiness and security."

"Poor man! and you say that you have no news."

"In fact, nothing of all that is news for me. I had long foreseen it."

"Well, prophet, if you said the truth about Charlotte, you were mistaken respecting another."

“Respecting whom?”

“Desgrieux.”

“How so?”

“Did you not tell me that inevitably he would love Virginia; that the heart was a mathematical rule, and that the man who has loved with all the passion and all the fever of youth, as sure as two and two make four, must one day, should he survive that passion, feel the contrary one, and Virginia, having crossed his path, that he would love her with a love quite new, and one which he would not fail to think (as in truth will be the case) a superior love to his former one? Did you not add that Desgrieux’s love for Manon was but a fever of the senses, increased by struggles, scruples, treacheries, sacrifices, constant thought, and acquiring, thanks to those powerful engines, all the energies of passion at times, all the joys of love; but that resembling water, which, compressed, bursts out in sparkling foam, and which, when it no longer meets with obstacles, runs quietly over the pebbles, in search for other outlets, so that fever would become extinct in an easy life, and the two lovers—for you said the two—quite astonished to find they no longer loved one another, would look out elsewhere for those enjoyments for which they had together contracted the necessity? You added, that the heart living only by contrasts, and the four types which we know thus meeting, Desgrieux would love Virginia, Manon would love Paul; and that it would be indeed fortunate should Virginia not love Desgrieux, and Paul Manon. Was that not what you said to me the last time I saw you?”

“It is true, and I repeat it; and, if I am not mistaken.

you are come to tell me of the change in Desgrieux—his sadness, his reveries, his sleepless nights far from Manon, and the visible grief of the latter, notwithstanding all her efforts to hide it. Well . . . .”

“Well, you are mistaken, and I saw wrongly.”

“Indeed !”

“Oh, you may laugh as much as you like, but so it is. Will you have a proof of it? At the present hour Manon is with Desgrieux, who was not able to support the idea of being even one day without her, and who wrote her a letter, of which those are the very terms.”

And Mustel repeated the contents of the letter.

“Thus, then, you are convinced,” resumed Goethe, “that Desgrieux’s love for Virginia was . . . .”

“Was but a little cloud in a summer sky, as you poets would say.”

“To which I could answer, sir professor, if I would continue your metaphor, that the summer is just the season for storms ; that the smallest cloud contains a spark of lightning, and which can at any given moment decide the tempest. But I prefer changing the style, and keeping that one for my writings. I just simply say to you, I lay a wager that, before a fortnight is over, Desgrieux will have Manon in abhorrence, and will be more than ever in love with Virginia ; that the return of the Chevalier to his love is but the last convulsion of a dying affection, the last ray of light from an expiring lamp, and that I know it, without having seen Desgrieux, as well as I know, sir jeerer, that two and two make four.”

“And what shall we bet ?” asked Mustel, in a tone intended to prove the truth of the epithet he had just received

"Look here," said Goethe, "no editor will agree to *print* my first book. I am as sure of that as I am sure a dozen will present themselves to purchase my second one. Well, I bet with you the edition of Werther upon Dutch paper,—understand well upon Dutch paper,—that in a fortnight my prediction will be fulfilled."

"I accept with all my heart; and I should be delighted to lose, so as to have been the means of getting a fine book printed, and to know that I had had some hand in doing a good work. But if you lose?"

"If I lose," replied Goethe, laughing, "if I lose, you shall select between the crowns of Europe the one you prefer, and I will give it to you."

"Agreed, prophet!"

"So be it, your majesty!"

Now, amongst the letters of Werther, and which Goethe treasured carefully, was one beginning thus:—

"Thou askest me why I have so long delayed answering thee. Can it really be thou, so learned a man, who can ask me such a question? Shouldst thou not be able to guess that I am perfectly well, but that . . . ? Thou wouldst like to know? Well, I have made an acquaintance which touches very near my heart. I have . . . really I do not know what I have.

"How explain to thee with any order the circumstances which have thrown me in the way of the most amiable of women? A heart so full of joy is but a bad historian.

"In one word—she is an angel. Well, thou wilt exclaim, 'That is the usual and common comparison of all lovers.' Well then, there are no possible terms existing

by which I can make thee understand how accomplished she is, and what it is that renders her so perfect.

“Ingenuity mingled with wit, a disposition full of kindness, the sweet peace of soul united to youthful ardour. Dost thou like that better? But all that I say to thee here is but a heap of vain words, which do not produce to thee even one single trait of her person. Later . . . but no ! now or never ; because, between us, since my commencement of this letter I have found myself two or three times on the point of casting down my pen, of having my horse saddled, and starting off. Nevertheless, I had promised so firmly to myself not to go there this morning ; and, notwithstanding, I run incessantly to my window to see how high the sun is risen.

“I could not stand it longer. I return now from there, my dear William ; and this time I will write to you, whilst I take my supper. What pleasure to see this charming sister in the midst of her beautiful little family ! But, if I continue thus, thou wilt scarcely know more about it than thou knowest already. Stay ; I will collect my thoughts, and then continue.

“I have already told you of my meeting with the Bailiff S——, and in what a gracious manner he invited me to go and see him at what he calls his hermitage, and which I call a kingdom. I had neglected that visit, and probably should never have made it, had I not by accident discovered the treasure hidden in that solitude. Our young people had arranged a rural ball. I was of their party, and had chosen for my partner a young, good, and pretty girl from here, but otherwise insignificant enough.

We agreed that I should take a carriage, and drive my partner and her cousin to the *fête*, and that on our way we should call for Charlotte S——. ‘You are going to see,’ said my partner, ‘a most charming person’; and as we crossed one of the large openings of the forest, which leads to the hunting-box, her cousin added, ‘But take care not to fall in love with her . . .’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because she is already promised to a most excellent man, who is gone to arrange the succession of his father, and solicit a very good employment.’ That piece of news was quite indifferent to me.

“We arrived before the gate of the court at sunset. I got down. A servant came to beg us to wait an instant for Miss Charlotte. I crossed the court-yard; I ascended the staircase, and, on entering the ante-chamber, my eyes were struck by the most enchanting spectacle.

“A young girl, exquisitely lovely, and dressed in white, was standing, surrounded by six pretty children, from eleven to two years of age, all raising at once their little hands impatiently, whilst she cut for them slices of bread in proportion to their age and appetite. What a charming picture! How much affection in the thanks of all those red mouths! Then off they went happy with their supper, some jumping, others quietly, according to the difference of their character, but all towards the door of the court-yard, to see the strangers and the carriage which was going to take away their Charlotte.

“‘I beg your pardon,’ said she, ‘if I have given you the trouble of coming up, and the ladies that of waiting for me. My toilet and a thousand little cares, caused by the absence I am going to make, caused me

really to forget my children's supper, and they will not take it from any hand but mine.'

"I answered at random a few words, for my whole soul was absorbed by her face, her tone, her manners; and I scarcely recovered from my surprise when she went to her room to fetch her gloves and fan. The two eldest of the boys had climbed upon the carriage. She allowed them, as I begged it, to remain there till we got out of the wood, but on the condition not to excite themselves, and to hold on very fast.

"You have read the above? Well, then, follow with your eye the necessary time for this carriage to be lost in the dust and in the trees, carrying joyously away to a rural *fête* Charlotte, her companions, and Werther, amidst the shrieks of the children and under the ardent sun of June. And now that it has disappeared, turn round. Do you see that other carriage, rolling rapidly towards France, on a road already stripped of every attraction? It contains a man and a woman. The man is Werther; the woman—do you recognize her? No, you cannot? That is, nevertheless, Charlotte, but Charlotte bearing the ineffaceable traces, which two years of struggle in the first place, then of terror, then of remorse, can stamp upon the purest brow and upon the most brilliant youth. It is Charlotte, and it is not she. She is no longer dressed in white, but in black; her cheeks are no longer pink, but pale; her blue eyes have changed their smiling looks, so limpid, yet so proud, for an expression of suffering and of terror. She no longer laughs amidst her companions; she trembles on the arm of her lover, as restless and as pale as herself. It is only by means of caresses and love, of hope and

promises, that he succeeds in drawing from her one of those former smiles. In fact, you know what has passed. What can I, therefore, add? Silent tears roll down that beautiful face, grown so pale, succeeding each other with the slow regularity of an eternal source, and without leaving to the one who sheds them even the strength to wipe them off.

“ ‘Charlotte, I implore thee do not weep thus,’ repeated Werther to her, in an entreating voice. ‘A grief like this, and in such a moment, is a doubt, a chastisement, death to me. Thou dost not, then, love me; and dost thou only perceive it now, in the moment when thou art giving me the greatest proof of love that a woman can give? What shall I do—good God!—to dry thy tears? Tell me, Charlotte, and whatever it may be I will do it.’

“ ‘Not love thee, Werther! What sort of woman would I be in acting as I am doing, and not love thee? Oh, no! my excuse, if I really have one, is to be found in my love, in that immense, irresistible, fatal love to which no soul, as strong as it might believe itself, would have been able to resist any more than myself; for I can say, my friend—and it is the last pride left to me in my fall—that there, where I yielded, even an angel would have yielded. Resist Werther—was it possible? God knows that it is my confidence and purity alone which have lost me, if belonging to thee can be called lost. No, no! I love thee, Werther; and very unhappy, infamous, and accursed would be the one of us two who should doubt the love of the other. But can I, all at once, cease to remember, can I forget in a minute, the wrong which I have done? This man whom I deceive, this man, from



whom I fly, and whom I abandon, he loves me deeply. What do I leave him in exchange for his love and his name ? Despair for the one ; shame for the other ! And yet I love my husband, or at least I believe I loved him before I knew thee. And my child—that poor little being, who does not yet speak, and already smiles to me, whose heart tells him, if not the lips, that I am his mother, whose life is a portion of my life, who was the hope of my future—thou wast there when I embraced him for the last time. Thou hast seen him as he took me in his little hands. One could have said that he guessed the eternity of that separation. Thinkest thou that I have not incessantly his image before my eyes ? Dost thou not believe that that was a frightful moment ?

“ ‘ Ah, Werther ! Oh, love me ! love me ! for it needs much love to reach the level of my fault, and to surpass my remorse. To think of never seeing again the child whom one has borne in one’s bosom, and that when he shall attain the age of understanding, all the force which he would have employed to love his mother will be spent in hating or forgetting her, and that, when dead, never shall her soul be consoled by that blessed dew of the tomb called the tears of her child ! Yes, I love thee, Werther ; yes, I believe in thee ; yes, I still hope ; but I beseech thee, let me weep.’ ”

“ And, hiding her head on the breast of her lover, Charlotte sobbed.

“ What do you think of a happiness which begins thus ?

“ The journey was long and painful, but at last the two fugitives arrive in Paris. Now at that moment Paris was

in a state of ebullition. The revolution, having taken its spring from the ruins of the Bastille, ran howling through the town. Werther hoped to stifle, in the noise of those great political passions, the one made around Charlotte by the remembrance which she dragged ever with her. He calculated upon the strangeness of the general sight to astonish her mind, and to divert her thoughts for the instant.

“What must have been the grief of this woman, to whom her lover would give for a diversion the convulsion of a whole people? And, in fact, Charlotte, in spite of herself, could not do otherwise than watch that immense noise succeeding all at once to her silent retreat. That gigantic movement, in the midst of which she found herself abruptly thrown, gave her a sort of dizziness. Scarcely could she, in that eternal whirlpool, follow her thoughts. All the men she saw seemed to be occupied with such great, such terrible things, that she began to tremble. Werther too, young, brave, enthusiastic, might he not suddenly understand that in such times a man has other things to do than to love? Might he not be carried away by the whirling current, and she find herself violently separated from him? That universal agitation, in raising a wall between her past and her present, isolating her with Werther, proved to her the necessity of that one love, and showed her its real power. Child, husband, reputation, everything disappeared; she trembled for her lover, and all her thoughts, all her terrors, were concentrated on that one point—Werther. She flung herself into his arms, clinging to him to detain him; she asked his pardon for her remorse, and threw

herself resolutely into his new life. Soon reassured by his love, strengthened by habit, overruled by all which surrounded her, wishing besides to forget, her astonishment changed into attention, her terror into curiosity. She, who thought to have never sufficient tears for herself, she found some to shed for others. She saw a queen prisoner in the Tuileries, taking her morning walk, sad and silent, in the garden of her royal prison, and through the railings the heads of a furious mob howling and insulting a woman. She saw misfortune in all that is most noble, martyrdom in its sublimest form. How small appeared her own sufferings by the side of *that* one! She was at least free; she possessed a heart entirely hers,—that is to say, a whole world wherein to take shelter. She wept for this queen, and thus borrowing from her own pain for another she diminished it. For an instant she had dreaded the anger and the hatred of her husband; but how trifling this hate appeared to her when, hidden beneath a veil, shuddering on the arm of her lover, leaning against the damp walls of the Jacobins or the Cordeliers, she heard those three great hates, which were named Robespierre, Danton, and Marat, giving the tone to the popular hatred which formed a circle around them. She was ignorant that this people had loved to idolatry what it now hated, and that the most implacable of all hatreds is that of those who have loved the deepest.

“Thus passed a month, and, shall we confess it? Werther and Charlotte were as happy as they could be. Charlotte had nearly forgotten. After all, for what will not the affection of the one you love console you? More-

over, we must say by the very exaggeration of their nature, women rapidly attain security. Charlotte began, therefore, in consequence of turning her back on the past, to smile a little on the future.

One morning, when she was quite alone, her door was abruptly opened ; she cried out, and hurriedly drew together across her bosom the dress which she wore for her morning toilet. A sergeant of police then appeared, and she heard the noise of the fire-arms, which the soldiers who were waiting in the next room placed on the ground.

"What is that ?" she asked with terror, withdrawing to the further end of the room.

"Is that the woman?" asked the sergeant, of an individual who had remained out of sight, pointing towards Charlotte.

"Yes," answered a voice, which made her shudder.

"Albert!" exclaimed she. And rushing towards the room in which her husband was, she fell on her knees, hiding her face in her two hands : and then only she raised her suppliant eyes to him who had the right to curse her ; but no sooner had she looked upon him than she retreated, still on her knees, to the end of the room, unable to utter a cry, and striking with her hands in the air, as if to cast from her that threatening apparition. In fact, there was enough to drive her mad. Imagine to yourself, before this poor woman, Albert black as despair, pitiless as revenge, motionless as a statue, and with hair entirely white. In one hour he had aged thirty years.

Charlotte rose : neither reproaches nor curses nor anger could frighten more than what she saw.

"Do your duty, gentlemen," said Albert ; and he left the room.

The sergeant approached Charlotte.

"Follow us, madame !" said he.

She obeyed mechanically, without knowing what she was doing. She went down, or rather was carried, to the street, where a coach was waiting. They made her enter it ; she sank down into one of the corners, her hands still before her eyes as if to close them still more against that horrid vision. Bare-headed, her hair in disorder, she knew not, she did not care to know, what was going to become of her. She saw but one thing—the white hair of that revenging spectre ; but understood nothing but that the hour of chastisement was come.

She felt, nevertheless, that the coach rolled on, and after a pretty long course it stopped ; that she was made to descend, then to mount some steps ; and that afterwards a door was opened, and that it was closed again upon her.

Even for those men in continual contact with all crimes, with all sufferings, there was something strangely affecting to see this young and beautiful creature mute, with hands ever clasped before her eyes. At moments she pressed with such force upon them, that it seemed as if she desired to extinguish for ever the sight beneath her lids. And not a tear to allay that fever, not a sob to reveal outwardly the tortures of her soul. Her commotion was such, that perhaps she suffered not : for to suffer you must comprehend, and, we repeat, Charlotte had arrived at that imperceptible limit which separates reason from madness, and certainly she no longer comprehended anything.

Perhaps she might have died in that state, had not suddenly a strong hand seized hers, and torn them from her eyes.

"Eh! Well, my beauty, are you not going to answer?" cried the man to whom the hand belonged. "There must, for all that, be an end to all these apish tricks. We must have a little talk."

Charlotte raised her head heavily, and looked at him who spoke to her.

"What do you want, sir?" she asked, with a sweet voice.

"Ah, she speaks little, but she speaks politely. Well, I want to see you first, just to make acquaintance, and then—"

"Who are you?" asked Charlotte, seeing around her a kind of room, of which the damp walls were scarcely lighted by a narrow window, grated with thick ironwork, and one of the corners of which was occupied by a wretched mattress and a chair. "Who are you?—and where am I?" she added, looking at this man, whose strange speech, still sounding in her ears, forced back upon her the intelligence of outward things.

"My little dear, I am the gaoler!"

"My dear—gaoler!" repeated Charlotte, raising the hand to her forehead, as if to retain there these expressions—terms so new to her. "What do you mean?"

"Ah, now—no pretending!" with that slight German accent. "Indeed, you are in prison; and you know it well enough!"

"In prison?"

"Eh! my goodness, yes. It is sad, but so it is."

"Yes, it is a prison!" repeated Charlotte, with the artless voice of a child, and looking again on all which surrounded her.

"You are going to say, like all others, that you have not deserved it."

"Oh, yes; I have well deserved it, and even more!" said she, with a piercing conviction.

"Ah, good!—that is the first one who owns it; also I must say that I think she is a little mad. But I have no time to chatter. In short, my little one, the question is—and it is for that I came—if you wish to stop in private, or if you go into the common ward?"

"I do not understand, sir."

"Poor innocent! I mean to say, that if you have money to pay for this room, then you can stay here; if not, you must go with the other prisoners!"

"Oh, no; I wish to be alone."

"Here?"

"Yes, sir."

"I can well believe it. This is the best room in the prison. It is the late room of Miss Manon. You did not know her—that Miss Manon? A nice one she was! She ran away with Marcel! That gaoler was no fool; but now that would not longer be possible."

Charlotte was no longer listening. All that passed around her was too strange to remain much longer intelligible to her. Nevertheless, the gaoler, by his roughness, had brought her back to a sense of the reality; and her terrors were not yet at an end, for she had to think of another, besides her husband.

"And Werther!" said she, all at once, to herself, "Werther, who will be returning, he will find the house deserted, to whom the people will say that soldiers have taken away his Charlotte. It will kill him. Then what

would become of me—between that head with its white hair and this one pale and silent—between my remorse and my despair? Werther must know where I am : I cannot be separated from Werther. Sir, I implore you,” said she, throwing herself at the gaoler’s knees, and pressing his hard and black hands, “Sir, in the name of your mother, in the name of your children, give me leave to go out from here for one hour—only one hour—and I will come back. I swear it to you ; and, if you require my life, I will give it to you !”

And, suddenly seized by that terrible thought that she would not see Werther again, Charlotte rolled at the feet of the gaoler, who began to think that decidedly he had to deal with a very different woman to those of which the house was usually composed.

“But I cannot allow you to go out,” answered the man, with some pity in his voice. “Go out ! Why, it is just in order that you might not go out that you are put here Faith, I will go and send you the governor ; for I cannot understand the meaning of all this !”

And, closing the door, the gaoler went away. Five minutes later the door opened again, giving entrance to the governor, a respectable old gentleman, who, knowing pretty well Charlotte’s history, approached her with much benevolence.

“You have asked for me, madam ?” said he.

“Yes, sir, yes,” exclaimed Charlotte, running with confidence towards this man, whose indulgent voice seemed to her to announce a protector.

“Of what service can I be to you, madam ? However, I warn you that I can do but little for you.”



"Oh, yes, you can, sir ! You can speak to me as you are doing."

And Charlotte, as if the old gentleman had recalled to her memory her father, took his hands, and, weeping abundantly, fell into his arms.

Her tears had at last returned.

"Poor woman !" murmured the governor.

Charlotte could scarcely speak. Drying her eyes between each word, she said to the governor of the prison,—

"I was arrested suddenly. What do they intend to do with me ? Do you know, sir ?"

"No, madam. I have received the order for the entry in the gaoler's book, and nothing more. The order desired even that you should be subjected to the same regulations as the other prisoners ; but I have taken it on my own responsibility to separate you from them, and give you this room."

"Thanks, sir, many thanks. But must I not pay for this room ? There was a man here just now who told me so. I have nothing, sir."

"Do not trouble yourself : I will take care of that."

"How kind you are ! But this is still not sufficient. There is one who will die, if he does not know this very day where I am. He must be informed of it."

"Alas ! madam, that is impossible. I have received the most formal, the most rigorous orders to prevent all outside communication. But be easy about that : the person of whom you speak will have learned immediately your arrest, and the place where you are. Your arrest

will have caused sufficient noise and clamour in the street where you lived for every one to be able to tell it to him. The officials of this prison are, unfortunately, well enough known,"

"Where am I, then?"

"In the hospital of St. Lazarus, madam."

"I am there!—me! And who has ordered that?"

"Your husband, madam. Oh! he punishes cruelly."

"Yes, sir, yes; but I have wronged him much. But do you not think," resumed Charlotte, weeping, "that he could have revenged himself otherwise—have killed me, for instance? But infamy! public shame! Oh! he might have spared me that; if not for me, for the sake of my poor little child. You do not scorn me, you? Say, you do not, sir!"

"No, madam; I pity you, and I pray God that the wrath of your husband may not go further."

"Can it go further?"

"Alas!"

"What can he require more?"

"He can— But ask me no more, madam; you will learn it soon enough."

"Well, so be it! Let the punishment exceed the fault. God, perhaps, may then accept of my repentance, and I may have thus purchased the right to love freely him whom I love. But did you not tell me that Werther would have learned where to find me?"

"And no doubt he will come to speak to me."

"And could I see him?"

"Impossible. But I can inform him of your situation. I may even be able to give him courage and hope; and I

can tell you that I have seen him ; that would always be some consolation to you."

"If God would still listen to my prayers, I will pray ardently for you, sir."

At that instant the gaoler reappeared.

"I wish this lady to be treated with the highest consideration," said the governor to him, who knew well his keeper's ways.

He bowed, in sign of obedience.

"And what do you want with me?" resumed the old gentleman.

"There is a gentleman in the waiting-room who begs to see you immediately. He is very pale, and looks much agitated.

"That is he!" exclaimed Charlotte.

And, in spite of herself, as if her heart had leaped from her bosom, and she could not do otherwise than follow it, she rushed towards the door; the governor gently held her back.

"Patience, my child," said he, "be patient." Then to the keeper, "The name of this gentleman?"

"Werther."

"Oh! I thank thee, my God!" cried Charlotte, dropping on her knees. Then, wildly, nearly mad, she said to the governor, "You will tell him, will you not, that it is for him I suffer, but that I forgive him; that he must live, for I should die were he to die; that I love him, and that nothing in this world could separate my heart from his?"

"Yes, madam, I will tell him all that, I have a right to say. Trust in me."

"Go, sir, go: he is waiting, he is suffering!"

Left alone, Charlotte kneeled down against the door, to approach as near as possible to Werther, very evidently the one and last hope of her life; she clasped her hands, as if the power of prayer could draw her near to the unfortunate young man.

In the mean time, the governor went to Werther. It was painful to see him so pale, so sombre. Perhaps never had the face of man portrayed a more heart-breaking expression than that which his disclosed. The governor received him with kindness, and told him all that he could tell him; but whilst the old gentleman was speaking, a bailiff entered, and handed him a letter sealed with a large signet.

The governor had a painful forboding. Werther shuddered. Certain misfortunes throw their shadows before. Those two men were thinking so much about Charlotte, that it seemed to them impossible that this letter had not reference to her, and bringing probably yet fresh additions to her sufferings.

Werther rose; a cold dew spread over his forehead.

The governor opened the letter; he turned pale on reading the first words.

"You are a man," said he: "take courage and read!"

And he gave the letter to Werther.

"Thank you, sir," said Werther to him, with a voice so affected as to be scarcely audible. "I know now what remains for me to do."

During this time events had moved on in Germany, as in Paris. Let us, then, go back there. We shall very soon meet again with Werther and Charlotte.

Mustel had returned to Brunswick, curious to know if

Goethe's prediction would be realized. He arrived there some hours before Manon came back from H——. He was thus at the door ready to receive her: She sprang gaily from the carriage into his arms. She had never been so smiling.

"Goethe is mad," said Mustel to himself. "Desgrieux loves Manon: she is not the woman to deceive herself about that; and if she thought the contrary, would she look so pleased?"

And thereupon the philosopher decided he was on the right road to gain his wager. O philosophy!

No sooner had Manon left the carriage, than she went to see Paul and Virginia. She stopped an instant on the threshold of their room, to look at that double life, flowing on, always calm, always limpid, always the same; and after having smiled at the happy young couple, she held her hand to the one, her forehead to the other. She passed the whole day with them, chatting, laughing, playing with the children, displaying, in fine, a continual gaiety.

"I bet that Desgrieux is coming back," said Paul, aloud.

"He will be here in three days, and I do not suppose he will ever leave you again."

"The incorrigible idler! Let him stop, then; it will not longer be *me* who will advise him to go now."

To Manon that phrase said,—

"Your gaiety is a proof to me that there is no longer any danger."

Manon looked at Paul, as a strong being would look at a weak one: a little *more*, and that look would have

expressed *pity* ; a little *less*, it would have been one of *irony*.

"A loyal heart and easy to deceive," murmured she.

And she returned to play with the children, already in their little beds ; but soon their little hands fell down weary, their little cries vanished in a last smile, and their eyes closed. She embraced them, and sat pensive ; her eyes, a long time uncertain and wandering, fixed themselves at last on a drawing done by Virginia, and hanging above the head of the children's beds. That drawing represented the two huts where Paul and Virginia were born. Manon knew it ; she often had contemplated it, but never as she had done for some time past, and particularly that evening.

"What are you looking at thus, dear Manon ?" asked Paul.

"That drawing, of which I love the artless truth. Will you give it to me, Virginia ?"

"With all my heart."

"But that would be remembrance the less for you."

"Which I could replace in two hours. I could make that drawing with closed eyes : it is imprinted on my mind and on my eyes."

Manon rose, and, unhooking the drawing, she placed it on her knees.

"Yes, that is just it," said she, as if for her, too, that likeness was a remembrance. "There to the left is the Hill of Discovery ; it is from there that the ships are signalled, is it not ? From there Paul watched the one which carried you away : there he suffered so much."

"Yes; but one would say, dear Manon, that you had lived in that country."

"Oh! I know it as well as yourself," answered Manon, with an intonation of which she alone understood the true sense.

"Indeed! Well, what is that road to the right?" asked Paul, smiling.

"That is the road which leads to the Pamplemousses; and there in the background is the church, with its avenue of bamboos, in the midst of a large plain."

"And that dark mass on the horizon?"

"The forest where you lost yourselves, is it not?"

"Perfectly."

"And now those two huts are inhabited by Dominic and Maria?"

"Yes."

"Will you never return to the Isle of France?"

"Oh yes!" cried Paul and Virginia, simultaneously, and in a tone which proved that this journey was one of their dearest projects.

"And when?"

"When the children are grown a little older.

Manon's face beamed with joy.

"There will be people there so happy to see you when you arrive," said she.

"I believe it.

"Oh! I am sure of it."

Paul and Virginia looked at each other quite surprised by the emotion with which Manon had expressed those last words. She perceived it, and, doubtlessly, not wishing to give a cause for her emotion, she resumed immediately,

pointing out upon the drawing that one of two huts which occupied the lowest spot,—

“And there is the hut where you were born, Paul.”

“Yes.”

Manon added no more. She looked on the drawing without seeing it. We would have said that a whole world of thoughts was passing between herself and that paper. Her reverie communicated itself to the two young people. It was very natural that those two faithful hearts should dream of their past. They had taken each other's hand without a word. Virginia's head rested on the shoulder of Paul, and the same recollections passed without effort from one to the other.

Manon looked at them for nearly five minutes, without their noticing it.

It struck the hour of midnight.

“And Mustel, who should have come to fetch you, he has forgotten you, dear Manon.”

“He will have continued writing, and thinks it is only eight o'clock.”

“Paul shall accompany you.”

“Adieu, Virginia.”

“Why? Farewell! you would say—*Au revoir!*”

“No, not good bye: good night, you mean—till to-morrow.”

“Yes, yes—till we meet again.”

“I love you so much,” said Virginia to her. “Do you believe it?”

“Yes, I believe it; I am even certain of it.”

“Believe it, because it is indeed very true. I have never given you any pain—have I?” said Manon.



"Never !"

"You have never regretted having welcomed me ?"

"I thank God every day for it ; but why all these strange questions ?"

"I like to hear you answer thus what I just asked you. Embrace me once more, and with all your heart."

Manon took Paul's arm and set off.

Not a word was exchanged between them during the short passage from Paul's house to that of Manon ; both seemed thinking deeply ; both were, perhaps, trying to hide their thoughts from themselves. When arrived at her garden-gate, Manon regarded Paul for some seconds by the light of a fine autumn's night.

Paul looked at her in his turn.

"Manon, be candid. There is something the matter with you this evening."

"What could be the matter ?"

"When at my house you gave me your hand ; that hand was burning, and now it trembles."

"It is a little fatigue."

"You assure me that nothing new has happened ?"

"Nothing."

"That you are happy ?"

"I have never been more so."

"You swear that—"

"I do so."

"Well, that is right. Good night, Manon."

"Good night, Paul."

Manon looked after him as he went. He turned two or three times : it seemed as if he wished to retrace his steps, that he had something more to say ; at last he

disappeared, and in the silence Manon heard the door of his house shut upon him.

"Adieu, Paul!" said she then, nearly aloud; "may you be always as happy as you are, as happy as you deserve, and as much as I wish you to be."

And she entered her house hastily.

Her servant was in the antechamber waiting for her.

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes, madam."

"The horses?"

"Will wait at five in the morning, ready harnessed."

"Good. Let Mr. Mustel know that I am returned, and that he need not disturb himself for me this evening; and after that you may go to bed."

Marcel withdrew.

Manon went on to her room.

"Who would have said," murmured she, looking at all the things which surrounded her, "when I entered this house for the first time, that I should leave it in the way I do? How strange is life!" And sitting down in a corner, she looked a long time at the drawing which Virginia had given her.

She then rose, and began all the preparations for her departure. To judge from the little luggage she took with her, she was not going far. After which, she wrote—

"MY GOOD MUSTEL, — When you find this letter, I shall have left. You will see me no more. I am going far—very far. I entrust the Chevalier to your care, and who, I fear, will be very unhappy, and will need to be loved.

“Why did you bring us here? The intention was a good one, and I embrace you cordially for that intention. Do your best to prevent Virginia thinking too ill of one whom she so kindly called her sister. And nevertheless, I cannot bid her farewell, although the cause of my departure is a most honest one. Where I go I cannot even tell you; for I have no right to go *there*, except it be unknown to all the world.

“Adieu, dear Mustel: think sometimes of me; and above all, may you be happy—the wish of a woman who goes away as happy as she can now ever be.

“MANON.”

At five o'clock in the morning, Manon got in her carriage and drove off rapidly. On passing Paul's house, she threw on the threshold of the door some flowers she held in her hands. After two hours' travelling, she arrived in H——, and alighted at the hotel where Desgrieux was.

She went straight up to the Chevalier's room, and, finding the key in the door, she entered his chamber.

Desgrieux lay asleep, entirely dressed, on his bed, and in a slumber perhaps more fatiguing than is even the want of sleep. The wick of the lamp, burned to the end, proved that he had sat up a great part of the night, and that only towards the morning had he been able to sleep. Near the lamp was a letter addressed to Manon. She opened it, and read:—

“MY DEAR MANON,—I am going to take a short turn with the minister in the neighbourhood, which will

last two or three days. Do not, therefore, disturb thyself to come and see me. Thou would'st not find me. As soon as I am returned, I will let thee know. I love thee."

"How much must thou suffer!" said she, very low, looking at Desgrieux with gentle pity.

The sleep of Desgrieux was never one of long duration. The Chevalier opened his eyes and looked around him.

"Manon!" cried he, approaching and touching her, as if to convince himself.

"Yes, Manon, dear; Manon herself."

"And why art thou here?"

"I came to say farewell to thee."

"Farewell! art thou going away?"

"Yes."

"And when wilt thou return?"

"I shall never return."

"And who may be going with thee?" said Desgrieux, in a voice which already resembled an impertinence.

"No one: if thou wilt accompany me, thou art free to do so."

"Thanks; I have no reason for travelling.

"Except that of travelling with me; and which thou offeredst me only two days ago. Didst thou not make me that proposal?—say."

"It is true."

"Well, I accept. Let us set off."

"And where are we going to?"

"Ah! very far, I warn thee."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall then go alone."

"Ah, I see ; thou no longer lovest me, Manon."

"And thyself, Chevalier, dost thou still love me?"

In addressing that ironical question to the Chevalier, "Dost thou love me still?" Manon had risen, and looked at Desgrieux in such a manner that a falsehood was impossible under such a glance. He understood it, and thought by a new question to evade an answer—the ordinary tactics of embarrassed people.

"Then thou art going because thou thinkest that I love thee no longer?"

"Yes ; that is one of the reasons."

"There are, then, others?"

"There is a second one."

"Which is—"

"And which is the best."

"Are we going to turn witty?"

"No, my dear Chevalier," said Manon, taking Desgrieux's hand and looking at him affectionately, loyally, if we may thus express ourselves. No ; let us employ neither wit, nor bad taste, nor anger, but let us be frank, so as to preserve a good and honourable recollection of each other. The time is come no longer to hide anything. Thou seest I am calm, even almost cheerful, which will prove to thee that my resolution is immovable."

"Manon, if thou shouldst abandon me, a great misfortune will happen."

"I must go away."

"Ah, thou hast the right to be pitiless, and to forsake me. Thou lovest me, and thou hast guessed my love for another woman. I torture thy heart ; I poison thy existence."

“That is a remorse which I will not leave with thee, my dear friend, I have but one advantage over thee—that of leaving this spot, for the pardon thou implorest of me I also could ask of thee.”

“What meanest thou? I do not understand.”

“I have no longer any love for thee, Chevalier; “there is nothing left but a gentle, a devoted affection like that of a mother. If that were not the case, could I be as calm as I am in the face of thy dead love? Could I, without that, smilingly bid thee farewell? I should weepingly ask thy pardon, but I nevertheless should depart.”

“What, then, has happened?”

“What has happened, my dear Chevalier, is that we have both obeyed a fatal destiny, as thou expressedst just now. When thou wast placed between Virginia and me, thou couldst not avoid making a comparison and finding a difference. That quiet life which thou hadst dreamed of with me, and which at last seemed on the point of being realized, thou, seeing that type of candour, of innocence, and chaste love, thou didst understand that it must have for its base chastity, innocence, and candour. Unfortunately they were no longer material obstacles which separated you from Virginia—those of family or money, obstacles over which one ultimately triumphs. It was the immaculate modesty which renders her invulnerable, and that insurmountable difficulty makes thy love appear to thee much greater than probably it is in reality. What thou lovest in her is the woman who cannot love thee. Oh, I know thee well, Desgrieux! I saw the whole truth. I watched every gradation—the progress,

the encroachment on thy love, even better than thou didst thyself. Thou wilt ask me, 'Why didst thou not stop me on the road at the beginning; why not have taken me away, whilst there was yet time to do so?' Alas! my poor Chevalier, I could not act thus. What thou feltest I felt also, and whilst thou didst love Virginia—"

"Thou didst perhaps love Paul?"

"Exactly so, my poor Chevalier. I love Paul more than I ever loved thee."

"And it is to me, Manon, and in such a moment that thou comest to say this. Thou dost, then, not think me sufficiently overwhelmed? Thus we are here, face to face, free to love one another, re-united as we so much desired to be; and we separate by our own free will, and thou hast the courage to fly from thy love."

"What can I do, my dear friend? Confess it to Paul, and publicly insult that repentance which has opened to me this door, that he may look upon me as mad, or drive me forth as a courtesan?—scorned by Paul, who embraces me as he embraces his children; scorned by Virginia, who calls me her sister! No, Desgrieux, no; I would sooner die. As an atonement, God offers me but one expedient; that is, to sacrifice my love, and to gain over myself an obscure but a difficult victory, from which Virginia will benefit, although unconsciously. By remaining unknown, my sacrifice will become all the more agreeable unto God who inspires me. I saw the evil from which I suffered reach thee. Incapable of overcoming it as I had done, I pitied thee sincerely. In coming here yesterday I offered to thee a last sacrifice, which, however, I foresaw would be useless. I

thus have given to thee the obole which Marie the Egyptian gave to the waterman who took her to her last retreat. To begin again would be impossible to me, for I have plunged myself in a transparent and pure water, where I have left all impurity without soiling it ; and now I depart, contented and proud of myself, giving thus to Paul the only proof of my love which I could give him. Neither he nor Virginia shall ever know anything about it ; for this is a confession of which thou art too honourable a man to reveal a single word, even to benefit thine own love. As for me, I am going where I shall find the only happiness, or rather the only consolation, to which I am entitled. Thou wilt perhaps tell me that I could give Paul another proof of my love in staying and defending Virginia against thee. My poor Chevalier, Virginia has nothing to fear ; thy passion, strong as it might be, would like glass shatter to pieces in dashing against that immovable virtue. Thou may'st perhaps die without her understanding the cause of thy death. Come now, own thyself beaten, and leave with me : it will be strange, it will be something new. After such an avowal, thou hast no longer either my jealousy or my reproaches to dread : all is for ever finished between us. But from our two different loves, and from the remembrance of our former affection, we could still form some happy feeling—something like friendship. Believe me, it is all we have to expect in this world. It is our own fault ; we desired to see what virtue was. So much the worse for us : that did not concern us. We are pursued by the same fatality : let us bravely endure it ; let us join together, and the one who suffers too much will ask for aid of the other.”



All this had been said in a simple manner, at times even cheerfully. How many tears that poor heart must have shed before arriving at that cheerfulness !

Desgrieux had listened with a sort of terror. Manon was his last hope of salvation. How she could have saved him he knew not, but it seemed to him that she could do so. He felt himself lost in losing her. Then, like all weak souls, we prefer to rush into misfortune, which they call fatality, rather than to try even to overcome it, and which gives to their weakness sometimes the appearance of courage. He replied hoarsely to Manon's proposal,—

“The will of God be done ! I shall stop.”

“Is that thy last word ?”

“Yes,”

“Well, then, dear friend, we shall see each other no more. Let us embrace for the last time.”

And Manon, with a smile impossible to express, held out her arms to Desgrieux ; it contained all the transformation which had taken place in her.

A mother would not have smiled otherwise at the departure of her son. Desgrieux threw himself into her arms, and remained there some seconds, as if there again to recover his former happiness. It seemed to him that he embraced a corpse.

“Adieu, my dear friend,” said Manon the first, with an unavoidable emotion, “adieu !” And hastily opening the door, she disappeared.

“Manon,” murmured Desgrieux, and mechanically he stretched forth his arms to detain her. He tried to call again ; but at the sound of the departing carriage he could

only fall without force upon his bed, and hiding his head in his hands exclaimed with despair,—

“What will become of me, good God?”

The tears which Desgrieux shed did not relieve him. If tears do not refresh, they burn. He felt himself by some irresistible hand urged towards Brunswick. He therefore set off, without looking back. He burned with fever: the fatal hour had struck when Virginia should know everything, whatever the result.

He looked so pale when he entered the house of Paul and Virginia, that both cried out,—

“For Heaven’s sake, Desgrieux, what is the matter?”

“Manon is gone,” answered he.

That was the best reason he could give for his return and for his agitation: in spite of the disorder of his mind, that reason seemed to him also the best of means to serve him in future with Virginia.

“How! gone?” exclaimed Paul.

“Yes, she is gone—gone in earnest,” said Mustel, coming in; “and there is the letter she left for me.”

Desgrieux pressed the old gentleman’s hand, whilst Paul and Virginia read Manon’s letter.

“What does this mean?” they exclaimed together, after having read it. “This letter shows a great sadness; and Manon wrote it last night, after having left us laughingly, and never looking more cheerfully.”

“It means, that you do not know Manon.”

The Chevalier took up with calculation, almost with conviction, his rôle of victim. In reality he bore to Manon a sort of ill-will for the courage she possessed and her superiority over him. He resumed, in a friendly tone,—

"I say the truth. I have just seen Manon : she came to bid me farewell."

"Did she give you the reason of her departure?"

"Yes."

"And what is it?"

"A very simple one : Manon loves me no longer."

"That is impossible!"

"It is true ; and she leaves me alone with my love and my despair."

Neither Virginia nor Paul could understand the real meaning of those two last words.

"There is something in all this which we do not know," replied Paul, in whom the recollection of the conversation which they had had the day before awakened suddenly a supposition from which he shrank, all vague as it was.

"If you can guess, tell it to me."

And Desgrieux looked at Paul, trying to read in his face whether he knew the true cause of Manon's departure. If he should know it, if Manon had not told him the whole truth,—if Paul was her confident, her accomplice, if Paul, in fact, loved Manon, which could well be,—had not he, Desgrieux, obtained by that a right to love Virginia? The fever with which he burned gave him for a moment that strange hope. But Paul's face remained as it should do ; and, the supposition which had crossed his mind giving room suddenly to another more probable one, he said, artlessly—

"Are you sure not to have given Manon any cause for grief?" said Paul.

"No more than yourself, my friend."

It wanted at that moment but very little to make Desgrieux become ungrateful, unjust towards Paul.

"Ah ! it is impossible," resumed the latter, attributing to the perfectly natural grief of Desgrieux the rather dry tone in which he had just spoken, "it is impossible. Manon will return ; it is nothing more than a whim, a spite to try us. In fact, I do not know what ; but it cannot be a reality. Manon will be back this evening."

"This evening," replied Desgrieux, "Manon will be as far from here as it is possible to be after a day's journey. Believe me," added Desgrieux ; "I am sure of it."

"Then I will know the truth in one way or another. We love her too much for her to abandon us thus."

"What do you intend to do ?"

"Where is she gone ?"

"She refused to tell me."

"Be it so ! I will find her again."

"You are going to search for her ?"

"This very instant."

Virginia could only look upon the departure of Manon as simple childishness. Could her purity, her innocence, suspect otherwise ?

"You are right," said she to her husband ; "hurry after her, lose not a minute, and tell her that if she does not return immediately I shall not love her any longer."

"It was at H—— that she quitted you, Chevalier ?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Patience : good-bye for a short time."

Saying this, Paul left the room, and jumping on his horse, which he had hastily saddled, he set off rapidly in the direction of H——.

Of all those who had been present at this scene, Mustel, with the exception of Desgrieux, was the only one, thanks to Goethe, who had a glimpse of the truth. He was still ignorant of Manon's love for Paul, but he could no longer doubt of that of Desgrieux for Virginia. He supposed that Manon, not doubting it any more than himself, had not been able to support so painful a spectacle, and preferred exile. Besides, that phrase of her letter, "I confide to you the Chevalier, he is more unhappy than I," what could it otherwise signify?

Paul and Virginia, in reading the letter, had only been able to see a feeling of pity for him whom Manon abandoned; but for Mustel, we repeat, there was not the slightest ambiguity. But Mustel entirely approved of Manon's resolution, and desired sincerely that Paul might not bring her back. Her return would in his eyes occasion much greater misfortunes than her departure, or at least complicate the situation in a more dangerous way. At the same time, the agitation of the Chevalier did not escape him; he guessed the real cause of it; the joy shown, too, by Desgrieux at Paul's departure pointed clearly out to him the resolution to which that opportunity had given birth. Physicians, dealing with a serious and tedious illness, often precipitate and localize it, so as to be the better able to contend against it. They increase the fever to bring on the crisis; the patient suffers more, but in most cases he is saved. The prostration into which he falls allows science to act freely with him.

Thus Mustel determined to act; he went down with Paul, and when he saw him depart, instead of going immediately up again to Desgrieux and Virginia, to pre-

vent what unavoidably would happen, and which must happen sooner or later, he preferred that it should take place immediately, convinced that the reality would contribute more towards the recovery of the Chevalier than all arguments or possible obstacles. He stopped, nevertheless, in the next room to that in which the two young people were, reserving to himself to appear when needed. One can see that the Professor progressed in the science of the human heart. There was also some curiosity in that arrangement; but what science is without curiosity?

In fact, Desgrieux, once alone with Virginia, forgot everything—the respect he owed to Paul, the evil he might cause, the danger which Manon had foretold. He only remembered one thing—the blood burning in his heart having set fire to his brain—that he was unfortunate, that he loved this woman, from whom he was only separated by a few steps, and that, to prevent his becoming mad, he must at last avow to her his love.

“Poor friend,” said Virginia, holding out her hand to the Chevalier, “how you must suffer!”

“Yes, indeed, very much.”

“But she will return.”

“No, Virginia; she must not even think of coming back.”

“Why?”

“I do not love her any longer.”

“Ah! she will repent, and you will forgive her.”

“I am the guilty one—not she.”

“What do you mean?”

“She knows everything.”

“What does she know?”

"She knows that I no longer love her."

"You not love Manon any longer! Do not say that : it is a falsehood—a sacrilege."

"I love another woman."

"You love another woman!" repeated Virginia, like one who, suddenly addressed in a foreign language, repeats the words which he does not understand.

"Yes."

"And Manon knows of that love?"

"She knows of it."

"Since when?"

"Since it has existed—since two months."

"Manon, who was laughing with us only yesterday, in this same place, knew that you were attached to another woman than her! Can that be possible? She would have died of grief, my friend. Come, grief is maddening you. Manon will return, I promise you. Calm that delirium : I am afraid of you!"

"I am in perfect possession of my senses, Virginia."

"Then it is I who am going mad, for I no longer understand."

"Of course, you cannot understand," replied Desgrieux, whose exaltation increased in proportion as he advanced in his confession. "You—you saw nothing, you would not see anything : it was nevertheless visible. I suffered sufficiently, and I also suffer enough at this moment. But Virginia is entirely wrapped up in her love, and cannot see the suffering of others."

"You are becoming unjust towards me, who love you with all my heart. You know it well."

"Yes, you love me," replied Desgrieux, bitterly.

“That is to say, if I were ill, you would watch by my bed like my sister; that to save my life, or my honour, you would give half of your fortune or some drops of your blood; or were I to die, you would weep, probably for a long time, over me, and you would never recall a thought of me, perhaps, without finding still a tear for my memory in the depth of your heart; for your heart is good, and you would go and throw flowers upon my grave, and repeat to your husband between two kisses, ‘That poor Desgrieux, whom we loved so much!’ For Paul loves me too, just as you love me; is it not so?”

“Oh! I shall call for help. You are suffering, Chevalier!”

“Yes; it is thus you love me,” continued Desgrieux, seizing Virginia tightly by the wrist to retain her. “But if I should say to you, ‘Virginia, I also love you, but with quite a different love:’ to save my life, to bring me back to my senses, you must love me as you love Paul; for my heart is bursting, it is too small to contain this irresistible, fatal, mortal love, what would you answer? You would laugh at my grief; you would scorn me, and would look down upon me, from the height of your love, and leave me blaspheming, to die of mine. Well, laugh and scorn me, Virginia, for I do love you!—I, Desgrieux, with all the power of my heart, and of my soul! Do you understand? I love you as I have never loved before, and as it is impossible that Paul should love you. You are my ardent, continual, and eternal thought. I bless the departure of Manon; it leaves me entirely yours. I transgress hospitality, I profane my friend’s hearth, I attempt the chastity of the wife and mother, in speaking



thus, Virginia : I know it. But answer only one word ; for mercy's sake, in pity do not leave me to suffer thus. See, Virginia, I am at thy feet, humble, obedient, submissive. I no longer threaten ; I pray with clasped hands. Tell me that thou lovest me, tell me ! ”

The Chevalier's voice stopped on his lips, he raised his hands to his forehead, as if to retain his thoughts, uttered a loud cry, and fell backwards in a sort of moral epilepsy. His body had no longer the power to support the weight of the mind. His lips yet murmured some unintelligible words, like the last drops of blood from a wound which is closing up ; and his eyes filled with tears, that merciful blessing for a suffering soul.

“ He weeps ! He is saved ! ” exclaimed Virginia, with a movement of joy ; and, kneeling down near Desgrieux, who had fainted, as she would near a brother, she pulled off his cravat, and partially opened his waistcoat, so that the air could freely penetrate to his chest on fire.

When she turned to call for help for Desgrieux, Virginia saw Mustel, who, at the cry of the Chevalier, had opened the door, and was contemplating her with admiration. And, in truth, was she not admirable, this beautiful and sainted creature,—so chaste, that not only her soul was incapable of being sullied, not only was it impossible to be reached by the love of man, but still more, could not understand or even see it, so that the passion which dared to aspire to her took, in her eyes, the name of suffering or of madness ? She only saw in the exaltation of the Chevalier the legitimate, profound, perhaps incurable, grief which the abrupt departure of Manon could and must have caused him.

The state in which Desgrieux was, served to recall to Virginia the image of the despair into which Paul must have sunk when she had left the Is'e of France. She even murmured, "Poor Paul!" From that moment the Chevalier might have said anything he liked to her. To her his words had no longer any meaning; they were nothing more than the murmuring of a soul on fire; and, smiling on him with the compassionate air which pity takes in face of misfortune and of weakness, she waited impatiently for some tears to flow, which might abate the fever, just as a few drops of rain suffice to calm a hurricane.

Nothing of all that could escape Mustel. He had heard everything the Chevalier had said; he read in the face of Virginia like in an open book.

"I have acted well," said he, seeing Desgrieux had ainted powerless, and undoubtedly saved.

"Ah! it is you, Mustel; so much the better. See in what state our friend is. Perhaps he needs bleeding; and Paul not here."

At the same time Virginia called the servants, and had Desgrieux carried into Paul's chamber.

The fever soon mastered the worn-out body. A cerebral congestion declared itself, and during eight days and eight nights Desgrieux remained unconscious, in a constant delirium, mingling incoherently the name of Virginia with that of Manon.

When he re-opened his eyes, he did not immediately recollect what had happened, and he looked around him with surprise.

"Well, my friend," said a well-known voice, "do you feel yourself better?"

Desgrieux turned his eyes at the sound of this voice, and saw Mustel sitting by his bedside.

"Yes, my dear Mustel," answered he, with a feeble voice; "but how long have I been ill?"

"Since eight days."

"And where am I?"

"At Paul's house."

"Oh, I must not stop here any longer," added Desgrieux, trying to rise; but his head, as heavy as lead, did not allow him to stir.

"And why should you not stop here?" asked Mustel, to whom the Chevalier's last words proved that recollection was returning.

"To spare myself the shame of being turned out."

"Who thinks of turning you out, Desgrieux? Are you still, then, delirious? Does not every one in this house love you?"

"You are, nevertheless, the only one who is near me."

"Because I have forced Paul and Virginia to go and seek a little repose."

"What?"

"Yes, ungrateful man! since eight days and eight nights they have not left your bedside; and it is to them you owe your quick recovery, for now you are cured."

"That is impossible," replied Desgrieux, recalling the scene with Virginia. "She must have told everything to Paul, or else—" and this thought lightened up the pale face of the invalid with a beam of hope, "has she perhaps understood the revelation of my love—has she some pity for me—does she love me?"

Thus, in fever or calm, in the delirium or in his senses, in health or illness, Desgrieux's love never left him.

He was thus wrapped up in that constant thought when the door of his room half opened, and a fair head appeared.

"Virginia," murmured the Chevalier, and he grew still paler than before.

At last, then, sense has returned ; and, approaching the bed, Virginia said, in the most affectionate voice,—

"Well, my dear patient, how do you feel yourself?"

"Better, thank you."

"Oh, how you have frightened us ! eight days and eight nights delirious ! How many foolish things have you said ! But you must be very weak. You have been bled three times. But I am convinced in a week's time all will be well. At the same time we have most delightful weather."

And Virginia, raising the window-blind, let down during Desgrieux's illness, showed him through the uncovered window one of those beautiful limpid skies such as winter sometimes gives us. But what the Chevalier looked at was not the serenity of the sky, but the incredible serenity of this woman in the presence of the man from whom she had received so frightful a confession.

"Do I dream?" he asked himself. "Is it indeed Virginia? Is it really myself? This tender and simple affection, the same as formerly, is it real or simulated? Is it pardon or irony?"

And he looked again at Virginia, who was preparing a draught for him, and who said,—

“Drink this, and do not speak. That is forbidden. I am going away, not to be a cause for your speaking.”

Desgrieux obeyed mechanically. He emptied the cup which Virginia had offered him, whilst she, approaching Mustel, whispered to him,—

“Do your best to prevent him from thinking on Manon, if possible.”

And making with her hands, her lips, and with her eyes a last friendly salutation to Desgrieux, she disappeared. He set down the cup on the table, unable to withdraw his eyes from the door which had just closed upon that white vision. In fact, all that must have appeared strange to him ; but he only understood one thing, that he could ask an explanation from no one, and could only wait for time to give it him. He was ignorant, as we may well understand, that Mustel had been his invisible confidant. Moreover, he was just recovering from such a violent fever that he was not even quite sure if he was not dreaming.

The Professor, guessing his astonishment, could have enlightened him ; but was the patient already strong enough to sustain the light ? Mustel, therefore, continued his reading in a corner of the room, without showing any other attitude than that of a nurse, and left Desgrieux to his thoughts. Luckily those thoughts could not take any form in a brain exhausted by fever, by delirium, and by the loss of blood ; but they fatigued him sufficiently to send him again to sleep, and a restoring, necessary slumber succeeded soon the feverish one from which the Chevalier had just awoke. When he opened for the second time his eyes it was night, and by

the faint light of the night-lamp he saw Paul sitting near, who welcomed his awaking with a smile. Life had already more visibly returned to him. Desgrieux's head was less heavy, and he could raise it without feeling any pain. He was going, therefore, to speak.

"Sleep," said Paul, "sleep. To-morrow we will talk."

He gave him a cup of the same beverage which Virginia had prepared for him. This time again the patient drank it without any objection, and the soothing narcotic principle which it contained gave him sleep till daylight.

The Chevalier was, therefore, on his second awaking in a position to receive the information he desired.

"You promise me to be very calm, do you?" said Paul, pressing his hand affectionately.

"Yes."

"Well, my friend, I have scoured the country in every direction, but I could not find Manon again. God will enlighten her doubtless, and bring her back to you. In the mean time you have here two devoted hearts—two very sincere friends—who will never abandon you."

Thus in Paul's mind he had the conviction that Desgrieux's illness was decidedly caused by the disappearance of Manon, the thought of whom, however, since he had recovered his senses, had not even presented itself to him. This was more than he could understand. Desgrieux looked at Paul as he had looked at Virginia, and, no longer doubting the sincerity of their language, he began to doubt the complete lucidity of his own mind. Therefore, when Paul went away to visit his other patients, Mustel, approaching Desgrieux, and reading upon his face all that was passing, said to him,—

"Thank your God, my friend, that you have done no harm, and that you have nothing to reproach yourself with."

"What do you mean, dear Mustel?"

"I mean that all that you see is very real, and that every one, with the exception of you and myself, believes your illness caused by the departure of Manon."

"And you, Mustel, how do you know?"

"I heard everything."

"And Virginia?"

"Has understood nothing. That is your fault. Why do you love an angel?"

And Mustel repeated, or rather analyzed, to Desgrieux all that we already know—analysis which he terminated with these words,—

"You understand that now a new attempt on your part—"

"Would be an ingratitude, and a useless, cowardly act," hastily added Desgrieux. "Be easy : no one shall have anything to reproach me with."

The Chevalier pressed his friend's hand as a sign of his firm resolution, and, in fact, from that moment, a gentle and healing sadness took the place of his former excitement.

"She did not understand," he repeated to himself from time to time, "not even wrath, not even scorn. Well, God's will be done."

The recovery was prompt. The Chevalier had a strong desire to get quickly well again. At the end of a fortnight he was up once more, and walked out for the first time.

But whilst those events, which would not have surprised her if she had heard of them, happened in Brunswick, what had become of Manon? She had continued her journey towards France, and arrived in Havre the same day on which the Chevalier left his bed.

As soon as she arrived, she inquired the names and destinations of the different ships which were in the harbour; and when she had obtained the information she wished for, she wandered about the town, for Havre was to her full of painful recollections, which she wished to recall once more before leaving France for ever. It was to Havre that she had been brought in chains in the cart of infamy. She recollected perfectly well the place where the ghastly vehicle had stopped, and where with his last crown Desgrieux had received permission from the chief of the guard to see his love for the last time. She little thought then that the following day she would be free, and entirely his whom she loved. Still less did she think that one day she should return to Havre under the impressions with which she now came back.

Manon, therefore, walked on towards that street which in thought she had revisited so often, and, as she approached, she saw a great mob, and heard a violent tumult.

"What has happened?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing," answered the man to whom she had addressed herself. "It is a dozen of condemned women who have arrived from Paris, and who will be embarked to-morrow for America."

Manon looked at the man who gave her that answer—the same answer which had been returned to Abbé Provost, when, some years ago, he had asked



the same question. She had then heard that answer, and she heard it now again, but fortunately for her under very different circumstances. But was it true what this man told her? Might he not have recognized Manon, and would shame her for having dared to show herself again? No; this man—and it was easy to read it on his face—had simply only answered the truth. In fact, a cart was slowly approaching, and Manon could see the women who were in it, with the exception of one, who, bent down, humbled, nearly inanimate, and hiding her face in both hands, had, in fact, the posture of grief and prostration which Manon had formerly felt. A young, pale man accompanied that cart on horseback, as had done Desgrieux near to that of Manon, and this man did not remove his eyes from the woman who was trying to hide herself.

“No, I am dreaming,” Manon could not resist crying out. “It is I who am in the cart; it is Desgrieux who is following me.”

And she rubbed her eyes and looked again. All was indeed very real.

The cart, and the man in the midst of the guards, continued to advance. The gloomy train passed before her.

“Who is that man? Who is that woman moving before me, like the living image of my past life? Oh! I must know it.”

And Manon followed the cart, which had now gained some paces in advance of her; but, at the moment she was just reaching it, guards, men, cart, and women disappeared under the great gateway of the prison, which received them, and which was shut after them.

The next morning those women were embarked for America.

The pale gentleman embarked at the same time as they.

Two days later Manon went on board also, and departed in her turn, carrying away with her as many recollections as the heart and the mind of a woman could contain. Where did she thus go to?

"Thou hast already received, my dear Tiberge, the letter I wrote thee in the first days of my convalescence. Thou knowest now everything—my love for Virginia, my illness, and my recovery, if one can call recovery the state of feebleness in which such loss of blood leaves the body of a man. Thou, who hast been the witness of my first disorders, thou shouldst be the confident of this my last misfortune. Where is the time of those follies which thou thoughtest irreparables?

"Was it not complete felicity in comparison with the state in which I now find myself? Oh, my friend, how easy is it to deceive men, if they do not deceive themselves! All those who are around me believe in the calmness which I affect. Paul and Virginia suspect nothing. Perhaps Mustel alone has some suspicions. I have surprised him two or three times following me with a look, I should say almost watching me. It is from this little old philosopher that I hide myself the most carefully. In reality, I am calm, like every man, who is animated by a determined resolution, moves straightly on towards a certain aim. No one speaks any longer to me of Manon, so as not to reawaken my grief; and I also do not mention her, in order not to tell a falsehood. Where

can she be now? Poor Manon! Here am I returned to this house, where I had hoped to have lived evermore with thee. With what irony does destiny amuse itself in scattering to the winds the projects of our hearts! I was in a hurry to return to my solitude. The continual presence of Virginia and of her husband increased my pain. I force myself not to see them. I am obliged to take this habit in order to have the force necessary to accomplish my project. God is good to have called my father. I have caused him only grief, and, were he still alive, I should be forced to give him still greater pain. Against the one thought which has at last offered itself to my mind as the only remedy against my passion, I have no longer to struggle any more than against my passion itself. After what has taken place, a new attempt, useless as the first, upon the heart of her whom I so madly love would make me but still more unhappy, would give me a fresh proof of my impotence, and perhaps add to it ridicule and infamy.

“Perhaps I might nevertheless hesitate, did I leave behind me any broken hearts, and mourn for long years over my grave. But I have already lost those who would die by my death. My father and mother repose side by side. I have no children. Manon is gone; and I am no longer of use in this world. But do not think me ungrateful in this solemn moment, and that I forget thee. In receiving this letter, thou wilt feel great grief, because thou lovest me; thou hast proved it to me so often. But thou hast great sense; thou art a superior man; and thou wouldst never give thyself up to that vulgar pain which might cause bodily destruction. Yes, i

suddenly, happy, young, beloved, I should die of some common accident, you might weep for me; but I die voluntarily. Thou wouldst say to me, 'How delightful that life which thou scornest, and which thou art going to leave to-morrow, would appear to thee, how thou wouldst thank God for having it given to thee, how thou wouldst pray to Him to prolong it, this foolish life, if this evening Virginia were to say to thee, "Desgrieux, I love thee"!' Four words, and adieu all that philosophy! Thou art right my friend; but those four words Virginia will not pronounce. Therefore, as our theories result from our interests and our passions, my philosophy is good for me.

"The man who thinks of killing himself concentrates all his sensations in himself and for himself alone; he feels himself then greater than any other. Is it therefore astonishing that, in his pride, he addresses to himself this question: Is it I who am going to cease to live for the world, or is it the world which ceases to live for me? The moment he destroys the soul, that is to say, the light of his life, the moment he substitutes abruptly darkness for the day, he may as well believe that it is the world which he kills as himself. He truly kills the moral world, which every man contains within himself: he breaks the mirror which reflects, but the objects reflected in it exist still for others.

"I could write an entire book with the reflections which my last hour calls forth in me. My mind, divested of the preoccupation belonging to life alone, applies itself directly to the most serious questions.

"Besides, am I not a theologian? Did I not pass

formerly most remarkable examinations, as they who assisted at them alleged? How is all that I then said poor, mean, in comparison to what I think to-day! Studied philosophy, how poor art thou by the side of philosophy acquired! and what a great teacher is a suffering heart! I seem from here to hear thee say, 'But since thou canst reason so well with death, that is to say, with the effect of thy pain, why dost thou not attempt to reason in the same manner with thy love, that is to say, with the cause of it? In a given time thou wouldst be as familiarized with the one as with the other, and thou wouldst be cured. Alas! friend, there stops my power. I have made that attempt, and I fell vanquished. I can cease to live, but I cannot cease to love. Oh, I do not wish to give myself in thy eyes a greater merit than I really possess. My death is not a pious and noble sacrifice offered to the virtue of Virginia. I die, not because I wish to avoid troubling the serenity of that soul, but because I cannot touch it. My love has all the exigencies, all the egotism, of earthly partialities. To make my love be shared by Virginia, whatever might be the consequences,—that is what I desire. I am a man—nothing more; and it is before impossibilities that I die. I fall vanquished, and not a martyr. Blame me yet again, if thou wilt, but do not admire me. Thou mayest even dispense with pitying me: I merit well the death I give myself. As for those who have known me in France, when they learn how I have died, some will say, 'It is not surprising he was mad'; and others, 'Such a wild life could not end otherwise.' And these are indeed right: I should not thus die, had I lived otherwise.

“ Well, good-bye, my dear Tiberge. I must close this letter, too long, like my life.

“ When thou wilt receive it, I shall sleep in that little cemetery which I see from my window, and where the most sumptuous tomb possesses but a simple cross of stone. Adieu ! It remains now only for me, dear friend, to ask thy pardon for all the grief which my friendship has caused to thee, without taking into account the one which this letter brings to thee. Be happy. I loved thee well.

“ DESGRIEUX.”

The Chevalier sealed his letter without reading it over, and took it himself to the post-office. He then wrote a short will. He had no relations. He left different legacies to the poor people of the town whom he had had the opportunity of knowing, to the bailiff, to Mustel, to Paul, and to Virginia. Was he as calm as his letter affirmed ? We do not believe so ; because too much was spoken of it. One does not face with impunity, so coolly, a crime like that which he was going to commit, for which no one, not even a poet, would be able to find an excuse.

The last evening which he had given to himself to live he passed with Paul and Virginia. He spoke of his intention to undertake a short journey. Paul and Virginia encouraged him to do so, beginning to believe themselves insufficient to console him, or even to divert him from his grief. Mustel, who had accompanied the Chevalier, whom, till his convalescence, he left rarely, was of their opinion. Besides, Paul and Virginia thought that Desgrieux had perhaps an indication of the place where Manon was, and

that he intended to go there. They did not see through his real project in the scheme of a departure; they only asked him to let them hear from him as often as possible. Desgrieux would have wished some little opposition from Virginia—something which looked like a foreboding, like fear—something which would have proved that he was attached to her heart by a tie more sweet and more mysterious than that of simple friendship.

“Perhaps she will finally understand the truth, and order me to live. To give me such an order would give me hope.”

Virginia guessed nothing, notwithstanding the sincere affection she had for the Chevalier. She imposed silence on that egotism, known even by the best hearts, who never like to see those to whose society they have become habituated to leave them.

The Chevalier then determined to go as far as possible.

“I shall travel alone,” said he, in a voice the involuntary emotion of which he did not try to hide—an emotion in which consisted his last hope. “The roads are not very safe. Would you lend me your pistols, Paul? Will you give them to me, Virginia?—they are hanging up behind you.”

Virginia took down the arms, wiped them, and handed them over to Desgrieux, saying to him,—

“Take care; they are loaded.”

“Thank you,” said the Chevalier, in a bitter tone, rising hastily. Mustel rose at the same time.

“You are leaving us already?” said Virginia.

“Yes.”

Paul approached Desgrieux, and shaking him affectionately by the hand,

"We shall see you again to-morrow," said he to him.

"Yes, my friend."

"You promise me?"

"I promise it."

Paul still insisted, as if he had a doubt of that promise.

"Upon my honour," added Desgrieux, "you will see me to-morrow."

And Desgrieux, taking the pistols, left this house, which he intended never to re-enter, and left it precipitately, hurriedly bidding a last adieu to both its inhabitants.

The Chevalier was right when he wrote to Tiberge that his death was not a generous one, but a selfish and wicked one. There was in it a desire to do injury to others besides himself.

Once outside, he set off with hurried steps.

"Well," repeated he constantly, "every one will have it so."

He had forgotten Mustel, who followed him like his shadow, saying on his part,—

"It would be strange if such a thing should happen—if Virginia should cause to the life of Desgrieux the same ending which Goethe advised to Werther. But that must not be. The death of Desgrieux is useful to no one. Chevalier, wait for me. You walk like a young man, and I am an old one."

Desgrieux stopped, and Mustel and he re-entered the house arm-in-arm. The Chevalier understood, even by the silence of Mustel, that he had there an inveterate spy, and one who must be deceived as much as possible.

"My dear Mustel, we are going to supper." And Desgrieux had the supper served in his own room. While



supping, he turned the conversation with a false candour upon Virginia, giving himself up in appearance to an openness which good cheer always serves to increase between two friends. He got Mustel to drink ; he drank himself, and said to him,—

“There are days in which I am pursued by such sombre ideas that I turn to intoxication to drive them away. Let us drink, Mustel, let us drink : wine is sleep ; sleep is forgetfulness ; and forgetfulness is happiness.”

The acquired theories of Mustel, particularly when he had a little Rhenish wine rising to his brain, were of those which went not beyond certain fundamental convictions. Thus Mustel would not have admitted that a man could blow his brains out after having sumptuously supped. As for him, suicide was impossible without a sort of preparation. The man on the point of killing himself seemed to him in too exceptional a condition to continue the commonplace habitudes of life. And what is more commonplace than eating ; and Desgrieux ate and drank ; and so well did he do it, that, when the Professor left him, he was convinced that he left simply a man who had yet again asked from material life a forgetfulness for moral suffering,—a man, perhaps, in the way of sinking into intoxication, but a hundred leagues from any idea of death. The morning dawned when Mustel went to bed, and with the first beam of the breaking day his last shade of suspicion passed away. He fell asleep.

Once alone, with a feverish agitation which certainly was not the expression of a courage sure of itself, Desgrieux wrote the following lines :—

“It is from your hand, Virginia, that I received the

weapon which is going to deprive me of life. It is therefore from your hand that I meet with death, the only consolation which I could expect from you. I accept it with gratitude, nevertheless: forget me; my souvenir would only recall to you an ungrateful one, who is going to repay with a great sorrow all the kindness you have shown to him. But I am too unhappy to live. I promised Paul, who perhaps had some forebodings of what is going to happen, that he should see me to-day. I keep my word. Let him come; he will see me, and he will see me happier than yesterday."

Desgrieux signed the letter, and, after having sealed it, and having addressed it to Virginia, he placed it on the table; he then seized one of the two pistols to assure himself that it was loaded; he tried the trigger, without being able to restrain a shudder at that sinister prelude, and after having cocked it, he applied the barrel to his temple.

His hand trembled.

It was then more difficult than he thought when writing to Tiberge. He was then afraid. Contempt of life, where wast thou in the face of death? However, as he was the only witness of his weakness and of his hesitation, Desgrieux replaced the pistol, ready cocked, upon the table, and remained standing before that inanimate object, which contained what he called repose. He looked at it for some moments and took it up again, but the Chevalier's glance, in turning aside from it for one second, fell upon a mirror. He was so pale, that he was on the point of letting a cry escape him. He then approached the glass, examining himself curiously, calling into play silently all the muscles of his face, as if to give himself a

proof that he was still alive ; then he again placed the weapon to his forehead, watching himself as if to see himself die. This time again his finger rested motionless on the trigger.

"Am I then decidedly afraid?" he asked himself. At this moment he saw in the glass the door of his room opening.

"Who is there?" he cried out, with a sort of terror, hiding behind him the pistol which he held in his hand.

"It is I, sir."

"What do you want, Marcel?"

Desgrieux could scarcely speak, so painfully was his heart beating.

"I came to clear the table, sir. I believe it is time : here is daylight."

"What is the hour, then?"

"Eight o'clock."

In fact the daylight, dull as it was, was already lightening up the country.

"Coward that I am!" murmured the Chevalier, in a sort of fever. "By this hour all should have been over."

"Do you require anything, sir?"

"No : leave me. You may take away the things later."

And taking up the letter which he had addressed to Virginia,

"It must be, however. I have written it ; I have sworn it. I must force myself to keep my oath," said he to himself.

And aloud he added,—

"Go and take this letter immediately ; and shut all the doors behind you."

Marcel departed.

There must no longer be any hesitation. In a few minutes Virginia would have his letter, and, after having read it, would come running there immediately. Before then he must die. There remained on the supper-table a full bottle: Desgrieux took it up, emptied it entirely, and tottering, haggard, he seized for the third time the murderous weapon. Such were the auxiliaries his will required.

When Marcel handed the Chevalier's note to Virginia, she gave a loud cry, and called out with all her force,

"Paul! Paul!"

He came running.

"Read!"

"Good God!" exclaimed he, and turning round to the servant, quite astonished at the effect which the letter produced,

"Who gave you that?"

"The Chevalier."

"When?"

"Just now."

"Perhaps there may be still time."

And without adding another word, Paul and Virginia disappeared.

Paul opened hastily all the doors which Desgrieux had ordered Marcel to close after him; and at the moment he opened the door of the drawing-room, which alone separated him from the Chevalier, a frightful detonation was heard, a loud cry, and the noise of a body falling on the floor.

Virginia fell on her knees, without daring to go further.

Paul stopped, petrified. Nevertheless there might still be hope. He opened the last door.

Desgrieux was stretched out near the window. Some paces from him lay his still smoking pistol, and his head was in a pool of blood. The shot, striking him above the right eye, had blown out his brains. Before anything, they must try to save him : but it was all over,—Desgrieux was dead.

As to what has passed within him during the few minutes which had elapsed between the departure of Marcel and the moment when the steps of Paul were first heard, no one could tell, but every one might guess.

Roused startingly, the rector ran in, pale, and accusing himself of half the misfortune. He gave an account of all which had passed ; but he took good care not to say the truth respecting the cause of the suicide ; it was a cause which he alone understood.

The next day Mustel wrote a letter to Goethe, telling him of these last events, giving also details of the last evening passed at Paul's house. The poet answered,—

“ Well, dear friend, was I mistaken ? Also I have gained doubly, since I have received a letter from you which is a real masterpiece, like all which is written by a man of heart, under a strong impression. The pistols, handed by Virginia herself are a most interesting detail. I certainly will make use of it in ‘ Werther.’ As soon as all those affairs are terminated, come to see me. We shall have a talk.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ GOETHE.”

The same day, what Goethe called "the affairs" were finished. The bailiff got Desgrieux buried at eleven o'clock at night. Paul and Mustel followed the corpse. Some labourers bore the coffin, and no priest accompanied the body.

The happiness of Virginia was disturbed, if not for ever, certainly for a long time. Events like the sudden disappearance of Manon and the violent death of Desgrieux cannot all at once interfere with the harmony of a happy life, and in the gentle habits of a calm heart, without producing there a great revulsion. It was very lucky for her that she did not know the source and the reason of all that had happened. With her, Desgrieux's death was the natural consequence of the flight of Manon. Abandoned by the one he loved, there was nothing left to him but to die. Even whilst mourning for Desgrieux, she understood him. She fell ill at one time, even her life was in danger, and upon her recovery she declared to Paul that she would no longer remain in Brunswick. Her home, which her two friends could no longer visit, that house of mourning, deserving for a second time its name, and again shut up like a tomb, that grave, newly dug, at some paces from her, were things amidst which she was unable to live as she was in the habit of doing. Paul understood her: he was himself not sorry to leave a country full of painful recollections, all the more that perceiving the evil result of it, he almost regretted the welcome given to Desgrieux and Manon. His simple wisdom drew from all those events the constant conclusion that any love which does not repose upon a pure basis and upon inflexible principles must inevitably end either in misfortune or



remorse. Neither had he forgotten the meeting with Desgrieux that night beneath Virginia's windows, nor the impression which she had produced upon the Chevalier. When he compared those events with the departure of Manon and the death of her lover, there shone sufficient light on his mind to give him a glimpse of the truth ; but he had so many reasons for the memory of the dead, as for the happiness of Virginia and even for himself, not to wish to ascertain the certainty, that he preferred to believe what every one believed.

Virginia, since her convalescence, went every day to perform a pilgrimage to the lonely tomb of her friend, which she would be obliged soon to leave, for at the same time the preparations for the resolved departure were going on. Now, that departure was nothing less than a definitive retirement—an exile from that civilized world amidst which Paul and Virginia had found no other happiness but that which they had brought there themselves.

After the death of Desgrieux they felt more violently than ever the want to see again the country of their childhood, and to ask from their earliest souvenirs some consolation for their later ones. But they were not people to leave Europe without paying it every debt of their heart ; and it was agreed that they would pass some months in Paris, near Bernardin de St. Pierre.

When Mustel was informed of those new resolutions, and when Paul and Virginia asked if he would accompany them, first to Paris, and afterwards to the Isle of France, he accepted with joy ; for had he any other family, that he should refuse this one ? He went to see Goethe,



whom he had kept acquainted with all that had passed, and told him of this new determination.

"They do quite right, and you also," answered the poet. "You are not made, neither one nor the other, for that which is going to take place in Europe."

"What, then, is going to happen?"

"God alone knows fully; but we can well foresee before a year from hence we shall have a general war."

"And why?"

"Because France thinks that she no longer requires a king, and the other Powers believe that she still wants one; so that the one desires to dethrone Louis XVI., and the others will not allow that he should be dethroned. So that to find out who is right they will begin in a stupid way by fighting. And I can assure you that it will be a terrible war. It is a question of life or death for all monarchies."

"Well, diviner, which will triumph?"

"The truth."

"Oh! that is no answer. Which is this truth?"

"It is that every man is free-born; that one is as good as the other, that there is no real superiority, but that of intelligence and of virtue, and that is what the world must finally be taught."

"That is your opinion?"

"Certainly; but that does not prevent me going to fight the very people who proclaim that truth."

"You are going away?"

"With the Duke of Weimar. It is my duty as a subject; but be quite sure that a day will come when all those petty and vulgar questions of territories and of

nationalities will disappear—when mankind will understand that those lines of demarcation, indispensable to those first societies which were formed independently, neither should nor can any longer subsist. Each people forced by its wants, its science, its commerce, its industry, will crack the factitious belt with which it is encircled. A community of interest will give birth to a community of thought. They will see that there is sufficient room for every one in the world: every man will own himself to be of one and the same family, and common sense will do the remainder. Then one will be quite astonished that such has not always been the case, and will ask themselves how the world could possibly have existed during thousand of years without understanding so simple a fact. In the mean time we must fight, since guns are the only means to make us understood each other."

"Thus you are going to fight?"

"Yes."

"Why do you not rather remain to work? To you belongs the empire without limit of thought, the domain without bounds of imagination. Why, with the power to be a king here, go and make yourself a simple soldier elsewhere?"

"One must see a little of everything."

"And if you are killed?"

"There is no danger. I have things to do in this world more useful."

"Well, follow your destiny. But you will write to me, will you not? for I feel as much affection for you as if you were my son."

"Thank you."

"And the manuscript which I am to get printed—for in fact I have lost my wager?"

"I will send it to you."

"And our heroes?"

"Werther and Charlotte?"

"Yes; what is become of them?"

"I know nothing of them."

"No news?"

"Not any since they arrived in France. Some catastrophe must have happened; and Werther did not dare to write to me, fearing to hear me repeat that word of foreseeing advisers, 'Was I not right?' But you can make inquiries about them."

"I shall not fail to do so."

Mustel and Goethe passed thus the whole day together. They separated, finally, like people who may probably never meet again, showing in a last embrace all the happiness they felt in having known each other, and all the pain which parting caused them. How many things had happened since the day when they saw each other for the first time!

Old Mustel returned to his narrow, obscure, and tranquil path, the horizon of which was near, leaving behind him the young man just entering on that wide and glorious course which led him straight on to immortality.

Paul, Mustel, and Virginia set off for France, need we say with what feelings? Hearts such as theirs are not like those which give themselves by halves. Since the death of Desgrieux, Virginia felt in her heart a sadness which nothing could calm, a vacuum which nothing could fill up.

Incessantly the smiling and cheerful face of the Chevalier, such as she saw it the first day, appeared before her eyes ; then suddenly as a dream the paleness of marble took the place of that smile, and she saw nothing but a motionless livid mask, with dull eyes, with half-opened and wan lips, and exposing to view the gaping, still-bleeding, wound through which death had entered. Then Virginia cried out,—

“ Poor friend ! ” and she burst into tears.

Women endowed with a fine sensibility, like Virginia, when possessed by any grief, finish, in spite of themselves, by making it a periodical necessity which, should it not last for ever, will at least continue for a long time, at first in their heart, and later become a sort of habit. The grief of women, even the most sincere, is much aided by the plasticness of their memory. Blood-wounds, visible death, strike them most painfully, because of their organization, much more impressionable than ours ; and when such recollections present themselves before their eyes they shudder both in soul and body under a moral as well as physical impression. Thus it was with Virginia, who, at the risk of falling ill, resolved to see for the last time, at the time of the midnight funeral, the face of him whom the tomb claimed.

In the first place, she considered it a duty—that last interview between the friendship which survived and that which was no more ; and also she was led there by that holy superstition of loving hearts which cannot be convinced by the information of others of the abrupt suppression of their hearts’ habits. They even imagine for an instant that the dead also, not answering to the

appeal of egotistical science, will answer to the voice of friendship in tears, and that they can find out some mysterious path by which they may go and seek for the hidden, not destroyed, life of that cast-down body,—one of those last and respected illusions which God allows them to cling to, at the moment on which they are struck down by grief, so that the fall might be less rapid, the shock less painful.

During the time that those events which we have narrated took place in Brunswick, a great change had happened in the life of the writer, Bernardin de St. Pierre, to whom we will return. He had married, and as a man of heart, of spirit, and of sense should marry at his age. He was not one of those who believe that genius alone could make up to woman for everything else, and that a young girl, taken away from the midst of her dreams, would find herself completely happy merely in saying, "I am the wife of a great man," when that man is fifty. Bernardin, the disciple and the painter of nature, was incapable of such an infringement of her laws. He would, therefore, never have married, had he not found a woman who, still young, and without having lost any of the hopes of life, had wisely confined them to an exchange of sweet sympathies and to the wish of sharing his retirement. Madame de St. Pierre's nature harmonized so entirely with that of her husband, that, the day after their marriage, one might have thought them united for ten years. Two tranquil rivers meeting, though the one may have come from a greater distance than the other, could not mingle together better than did those two existences. Of a distinguished mind, a

courageous soul, Madame de St. Pierre possessed everything required to understand, even to inspire, her husband, and to encourage and support him in misfortune should such overtake him one day. She was, in fact, the best companion whom God could give to the author of 'The Harmonies of Nature.' A child, the result of this union, was soon expected, and would complete their happiness. From another point of view, that of material life, Bernardin had obtained what he desired, and, besides his private works, an employment agreeing the best with his tastes—that of intendant of the Botanical Garden. What other want could he have, living with a beloved wife amidst flowers and work, that is to say, with all that God has created the most pure and the most noble? We will not do our reader the injustice to explain to him how Mustel, Paul, and Virginia were welcomed by the poet. It was a universal joy, shared by Madame de St. Pierre.

A year had passed since Mustel had quitted his friend. Spring had returned; but Paris, more noisy than ever, did not seem to perceive it. There was but one season in France, that of politics. Our three disembarked ones had taken a lodging near Bernardin, and isolated themselves in act and thought from an agitation which did not concern them.

If happiness should have suddenly disappeared from earth, it might have been sought for in the quiet spot where this little colony dwelt. It resembled the holy arch where God protected. The two children of Paul contributed not a little towards enlivening the house, and Madame Bernardin gave them a portion of those smiles

and of that love which she was reserving for the little one she so soon expected.

We may be very sure that Bernardin had been made acquainted with all that had happened in Brunswick; but Mustel alone could give him the real cause—at least, concerning Desgrieux, for no one knew what had become of Manon. Besides that, he had to thank him for the acquaintance with Goethe, which he owed to him. Nor did he fail to relate to him the whole history of Werther and Charlotte. They had even made inquiries to try to learn something about the fate of these two lovers; but that incident had disappeared in the great events of the capital like a bark upon the ocean, and no one knew who Charlotte and Werther were. Insults to the king, threats to Lafayette, suspicion of Dumouriez, love for Marat, admiration for Danton, enthusiasm for Robespierre, cries, fears, madness as much as one could desire; but as for any other things whatever, it was not to be thought of.

In his suburb of St. Marceau, Bernardin soon perceived that not only was he in the direct stream, but at the very source even of the riots which burst out around the Tuileries and the Convention. He therefore did not think those he loved any longer in safety in Paris, and he took them off to his newly finished cottage at Essonne. His duties of office brought him once a week to Paris; and in spite of his resolute desire to live himself and to keep his family—for he regarded Paul and Virginia as his children—in ignorance of the popular agitation, he still brought always something back with him.

They began to get afraid. The evening passed away in questioning, in listening, in answering. The waves increased daily. The peasant deserted his plough; the noble fled from his domain; desertion of work, desertion of repose, the courage of the few quadrupled by the flight of the others, civil war, war abroad, all that made a noise of which the echo must strike even the deafest ears. The generous soul of Paul could not have remained long inactive. In those great questions that frank and loyal heart grew excited at everything he heard, and he expressed aloud his thoughts. There was therefore danger for him, and Virginia became afraid.

“Take your husband away. Go!” said Bernardin de Saint Pierre. “It is just in time. Paul is young, brave, enthusiastic. He could not be an impassible spectator of those strange events of which we are going to be spectators. Go!—the soil is burning; and you, my dear Mustel, go with them. I entrust them to you. We, we stop. By our age, by our family, by our interests, by our national love, in fact, by all the roots of our heart, we are attached to the soil. It is not thus with you. Leave, therefore, whilst there is time.”

Thus everything, forced little by little, drove those two children of nature back towards that nature where they had been born. Thus in that civilization, in the midst of which they had for some time mixed, nothing was pure enough for them: they only carried away for it painful recollections.

They therefore left Paris, with the two children and Mustel, the latter taking with him some work. Three



days since, he had received the manuscript, or rather the copy of the manuscript, of Werther ; for, with the superstition common to poets, Goethe did not like to part with his first writing. Mustel intended to translate into French the work of the German poet, as he had translated Paul and Virginia into German. A letter from Goethe accompanied the manuscript :—

“Dear friend,” said he, “here is ‘Werther’ done over again, revised, ready to be printed on *papier de Hollande*. To pay your wager, you may take as much time as you like : I even prefer that my book should wait until peace, to appear. When you receive this parcel, we shall be already in campaign. Remark the charming writing of the copy I send you. There is there quite a history, which I shall relate to you some evening, should I ever see you again, or which I will write to you, if I should not do so. The hand which wrote this copy is small, white, with pink nails like young almonds ; she to whom it belongs is called Marguerite. Is that not a charming name ? Well, adieu, dear traveller ; I embrace you very strongly, as we should embrace those who leave us, as well as those who return.”

Our three travellers arrived in Havre. This occurred in the middle of the month of September. They were obliged to wait several days before they could embark.

The windows of Mustel's room, as well as those of Paul and Virginia, looked right over the harbour ; but Mustel, always the first to rise, opened his to look at the sea. He understood now how there were people who passed their entire life without other amusement than those

moving horizons : vessels arrived, went out, and crossed each other.

One morning, Mustel saw appear on the line which seemed to connect in the distance sea and sky a white spot, which he could have taken for the silvery reflexion of the sun upon a wave. The speck disappeared, re-appeared, and our old friend followed it with his eyes with that attention, that interest even, which the most serious mind can, in certain cases, lend to the most trifling incidents. He became finally absorbed in the contemplation of that nearly invisible speck. He saw it by degrees increase ; he perceived distinctly its bulging sides, its gloomy sails ; he counted its three masts, and recognized it as a fine and good first-class merchant-ship arriving with all the rapidity of a favourable wind. Before an hour she would be at the entry of the harbour. Mustel went for his telescope—where is the old man who has ever travelled without that instrument ? for having seen the vessel, he wished also to watch the working of her by those who manned her, and which, at such a distance, was imperceptible to the naked eye.

The pilot-boat went down to meet her. Mustel saw the pilot tack about, salute the captain, cross the deck, and sit down near the helm. The ship then began to brace up the large sails in order to slacken her pace, which in fact did slacken, and, obedient to the simple impulsion of the rudder and the small upper sails, she sailed on a few minutes longer, and with arms akimbo, so to say, she entered proudly the hospitable port. Mustel could then see the sailors in one straight line, with

swinging motion, doubling up the chain belonging to the anchor, whilst others flung on to the land ropes; heavy iron rings awaited them. All that noise, deafening when near, but which in the distance is but as a movement amidst the silence, amused—we find no other word but that childish term—really amused Mustel. In the mean time, a number of small boats had set off to go and board the new arriver, to take off her merchandise and her passengers. Soon the latter descended the little ladder, and sprang into the different boats, which instantly turned their course towards the land. Mustel's telescope turned from one boat to the other, without other curiosity than that of habit, when at once his looks were fixed intently in one direction.

“Do I dream?” exclaimed he.

And he looked more attentively.

“But no! Oh! that would be too strange!”

And closing his glass, he leaned out of the window and looked intently at a barque which, approaching the quay, set down a traveller whom the waterman was obliged to address once or twice, to rouse him from his reverie, and make him understand that he had arrived.

At the third call the young man raised his head, and Mustel cried out,—

“It is indeed he!”

Then opening the door, he ran as quickly as he could to meet this traveller, who had stopped like a man who has no longer any notion of what he has to do, nor even what he is doing. He was so pale, this man, entirely dressed in black, he represented so visibly a great sorrow, that during a moment Mustel stopped short, with a sort

of respect, before him, not venturing to disturb him, even to give him a mark of interest. He nevertheless decided himself to do so, and, touching him upon the shoulder, he said,—

“ Mr. Werther, can I be of any service to you ? ”

Hearing his name uttered, the young man started with a sort of terror.

“ You know me, sir ? ” he asked him.

“ Yes, sir, and even more than you may think.”

“ Who are you then ? for I do not recognize you.”

“ My name is Mustel ; but my name can recall nothing to you, for you had not any reason to inquire about it, and we have only seen each other once,—it is true, that it was in the house of one of your good friends.”

“ Where was it then ? ”

“ At Goethe’s.”

Werther looked more attentively at the Professor.

“ In fact,” he said, “ I remember now having seen you. Was it not in the month of June of last year ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Does Goethe continue happy ? ” resumed he, after a moment of silence.

“ Yes ; besides, nothing is wanting to him to be so : he has youth and genius.”

And whilst Mustel thus answered, he looked around him, saying to himself,—

“ Werther here, and alone ? From where does he come ? Where is Charlotte ? ” He was not the man not to attempt to discover the end of that drama.

“ Indeed, our meeting is strange,” he began again, pressing affectionately the hand of his questioner, “ prin-

cipally for me. Do you know what I received a few days ago from Goethe? Yes, really it is strange. I have received, in order to get it printed, in consequence of the wager which I lost, the whole history of your life. I have it there in my room. In that book you are dead, killed by this poet, with so much talent that I should doubt of your existence had I not the happiness to shake you by the hand."

"Yes, Goethe always told me that he should write this history. What are, indeed, to poets the joys and the sorrows of their best friends, except as matter for a romance or for some philosophical development? From what you tell me, I think he must have applied for a *dénoûment* to his own imagination,—I should even say to his foresight. Why am I not dead in reality? I should have died happy; whilst I now live, the most guilty, the most miserable of mankind."

"I saw immediately that you carried with you a great grief, and I wished to offer you, not consolation, but the aid of my experience and of my sympathy. Besides, through my relations with Goethe, by the hazard which mingled me in your destiny, I cannot be longer an entire stranger to you. Do not, therefore, see the indiscretion of vulgar curiosity in the desire I have to know your misfortunes. Accept the hospitality which I offer you, as I should offer it to an unfortunate son."

To such words Werther could only answer by thanking him who uttered them, and accepting his offer.

Some minutes later, Werther was by the side of the Professor, in the room from which he had watched his

approach, his elbow leaning on the back of his chair, his head resting upon his hand ; he said nothing, he was even thinking of nothing. In incurable griefs there are often moments of complete loss of thought. This state, resembling repose, is nothing but fatigue ; and, indeed, we should thank God, who allows our suffering to strike us strong enough to deprive us for an instant of feeling its sensation. The Professor took care not to rouse Werther from his dejection, which was akin to calmness : the young man quitted it of himself without any effort, saying :—

“ Will you lend me that manuscript ? ”

“ Yes,” said Werther, stopping at one of the first pages, “ yes ; it is just so. There is the letter which I then wrote to him. He has not changed a word. But what could he add or retrench ? It was my whole, my entire soul which spoke. Why am I not still at the date of that letter ? Oh, I am very wretched ! ”

And Werther, dropping the book of his happy life, threw himself into Mustel’s arms, sobbing like a child.

“ Is it not ridiculous, for a man to weep thus ? But it is the first time for four months, in which I have suffered as no man ever suffered before. It is also true that, since that period, this is the first time that it has entered the head of any one to pity me.”

“ And Charlotte ? ” asked Mustel, gently.

“ Dead ! ” answered Werther, hoarsely ; and that word suddenly dried the tears in his motionless eyes.

“ Dead ? ”

“ Yes, dead—out yonder, dead—killed, dishonoured,

lost by me,—dead without other tomb than the sand of the desert, without other hope but the infamy attached to her name.”

“Oh, it is a frightful history,” resumed Werther, with a sort of fever. “How is it that I did not become mad? I know not! I saw her die—she whom I loved so intensely. I saw her die through misery, through fatigue, through remorse. With my own hands I dug the earth which protects it, or rather which devours it at this moment. And I—I live? What chastisement! Oh, you shall know everything, sir. I would tell my crime—for it is one—to the entire world, and, cursed by the whole world, I should not be sufficiently punished.”

“Come, my child, calm yourself. It was above human force to resist such love. You are more unfortunate than guilty.”

“There are moments when I doubt the truth—when it seems to me that I am only dreaming, and that I am going to meet Charlotte again, as I knew her, smiling and pure amidst joyous children. How could I take her from that peaceful happiness to this desperate end? How could I do thus—I who loved her so? I loved her then only for myself. I was a wretch, an infamous egotist. And on her part not a reproach, not a regret. Why did she not accuse me?—why not curse me? I think I should suffer less; but, on the contrary, she died smiling on me, praying that I would live—I who wished to die by her side—so that, as she said, there might remain on this earth one to weep for her; and that I should return to my mother, that there may not be yet another soul to curse her. And so I live; and

I take back to my mother a shattered body, a dead heart, an everlasting grief, to be consoled eternally, though never calmed. But, in fact, it is her child I bring her back, and that is sufficient for a mother. I shall say to her, 'Here I am ; do with me what you will. The only thing I ask of thee is permission to weep.' And she will weep with me, and henceforth her only happiness will consist in sharing my grief. Am I not a fated being? I had two loves in my life—my mother and Charlotte—and I have proved my love to them only by making them both unhappy. As for the events which have caused this horrid *dénouement*, they are dreadfully simple. Charlotte's husband, learning the flight of his wife, pursued her. He discovered our retreat in Paris; he invoked the full rigour of French laws. He got Charlotte arrested, and taken to the Hospital of St. Lazarus as a prostitute."

"Good God!—she, Charlotte?"

"Yes, sir. I understood the love of that man by his revenge; and I feel forced to forgive him—I, whose love is brother to his—I, whose grief is equal to his, which I have caused. Ah, I repeat it, a thousand years of unceasing repentance could not expiate the evil which I caused in a few days; and to prevent that wrong only the courage of an instant was needed, only the resolution of a minute, and I had it not. There are moments when a terrible doubt seizes me—a terror even worse than remorse. I say to myself, that perhaps I did not love Charlotte as much as she should have been loved. In fact," continued Werther, returning abruptly to the recital of the events, so as to drive from his heart and his mind that horrid doubt by which he was tormented—



“in fine, Albert did not stop there, and, two days after she had been incarcerated, Charlotte—”

Werther stopped short, just as if it seemed to him impossible to express that second and painful avowal.

“Charlotte?” repeated Mustel, in order to aid him.

“Charlotte, condemned to transportation, was sent, with eight or ten of those women condemned to the same punishment, in a hideous cart to Havre, whence they were embarked for America.”

“Strange! how strange!” murmured Mustel, struck by the coincidence in the history of Charlotte with the written one of Manon; and he exclaimed suddenly, “But it is impossible!”

“Is it not? That is what I repeat still to myself—I who saw it—I who shall see that horrid sight until the last throb of my heart. No, no; it is quite real. My first idea was to spring upon the guards who accompanied that living convoy of the modesty of the woman I loved, but once more the impossibility of the act stopped me. Charlotte was so depressed that she not even thought of dying; she felt already dead. As for me, I could not even hope for that last consolation; for insomuch as it would have been noble to have died some months before, to leave her to the love and the respect of every one, so would it have been cowardice to abandon her at such a moment to infamy and isolation. I accompanied the fatal cart, which, in return for some money I gave them, the escort permitted me to do. When Charlotte was in a state to speak, all she could say was,—

““Yes, the punishment is great; but the sin is greater

than the punishment. These women with whom I am mingled have neither family, nor husband, nor children. I have deceived all those who loved me. I am more guilty than these women.'

"My heart was broken by such speeches. They were my living and unceasing chastisement," resumed Werther. And nevertheless such was the power of my love, that I still continued at times to hope.

"That infamous exile, it is true, was dishonour in the opinion of the world; but once far from that world, it was freedom to love each other without fear, without even remorse; for, punished thus, Charlotte's fault had become but a great misfortune, and she no longer owed any reckoning to those who had so punished her. There was sufficient love left in my heart to make Charlotte forget anything. Alas! I could not foresee what awaited us.

"After a navigation of two months, we landed on the desired shore. We found a barren country, where merely a few reeds and some trees stripped by the wind were to be seen. We were presented to the governor of that poor colony. For a long time he conversed privately with the captain, and then, coming back to us, he examined one after the other all the women arrived by the vessel. He gave the prettiest to the principal inhabitants of the town. He had not yet spoken to Charlotte; and we remained, therefore, she and I, alone with him.

"I hear from the captain," said he, 'that you are both persons of merit and understanding. I will not enter into the reasons which have caused your misfortunes. I offer you my friendship. Be happy: you may be so still.'

"I embraced with joy the governor, who had the

power, of which, however, I was as yet ignorant, to give Charlotte to any one he liked. Thus it is in that strange colony. He seemed to me more humane, more gentlemanly even, than is generally the case with the rulers of those exiled, or rather transported. Charlotte exerted herself to find once more a smile to thank our protector. He gave orders for us to have one of the least poor cottages, and invited us to pass the evening with him and his nephew. We possessed nothing more—neither Charlotte nor myself. I was not rich : the following her to France, and from there to America, had exhausted my resources. I communicated our position to the governor ; for I would not subject Charlotte to a life of work and privation, which she nevertheless accepted with an angelical resignation, in order not to cause me pain. The governor, having foreseen this, had obtained for me a situation which had just become vacant in the fort. It was but little, yet that occupation gave us the means of living without being a charge to any one. I engaged a valet for myself, and a servant for Charlotte,” continued Werther, who seemed to dwell with happiness upon the minute details, the last moments of joy he has had. “Our little fortune increased. We allowed no occasion to escape, where we could benefit our neighbours as much as possible. What more noble distraction to a suffering heart than charity ? It was the first which Charlotte permitted to herself. During several weeks, I can say so, we were happy. All my efforts were employed to rob Charlotte of her recollections. I enclosed her so firmly in my love that she learned to see nothing beyond it. Besides, was it not with her one excuse, her only refuge ? God thus allowed one ray of sunshine to penetrate into our

life, by which we warmed ourselves for an instant, and which we took for the break of a new day. But it was only a celestial pity—nothing more. Could God make Himself the accomplice of a happiness bought at the price of all that is holy? No : God is good, but He is just, and what we took for a return of this goodness was nothing but the repose of His justice.

“One morning I saw the almoner enter our cottage. He was a man full of friendship for us, who assisted him as much as lay in our power in his pious ministry.

“‘My friend,’ said he, ‘be strong and courageous.’

“‘What has then happened?’ cried I, with a sinking heart.

“‘Heaven will try you still more.’

“The almoner begged Charlotte to withdraw for an instant, but which she refused to do, replying,—

“‘We are but one in all sufferings. Speak, if you please.’

“The old man decided to do so.

“‘Well,’ resumed he, with an effort, ‘the governor requires that you should give Charlotte up to him. You know that he is the master.’

“‘Give up Charlotte to him? And for what purpose?’ asked I; for I did not understand.

“‘Every woman who arrives here as Charlotte arrived belongs to the colony, and the governor can dispose of her just as he thinks proper.’

“‘Explain yourself, father.’

“‘Well, then, the governor gives her to his nephew, who loves her.’

“Charlotte gave a heart-rending shriek, and fell sense-

less in my arms. As for me, the first moment I thought I should go mad. The empire which the nephew exercised over his uncle was immense. There was, therefore, nothing to hope either from this governed old man or from this enamoured and violent young one.

“‘It is well, my father,’ said I to the almoner, when I had regained the use of my speech ; ‘the will of God be done. Return to the governor ; entreat him yet again for us, and bring us back his orders ; we will obey.’

“The priest withdrew. It was night. I brought Charlotte back to her senses. I took a knife, for death had again become to us a last resource, and we set off without knowing where we were going ; but we continued walking, in order to put between us and our pursuers as great a distance as possible. We spoke not a word ; but we pressed close one to the other, as if to recall to ourselves that we were still living, that we yet loved one another, and that all human power would be crushed against that double love. It was a strange thing, that silent flight at night across an unknown country, towards an ignored horizon, terror for our guide, and death for our companion.

“Thus, indeed, should flee two beings pursued by the consequences of an irreparable fault. We walked on, without stopping, till daylight. I understood by Charlotte’s uneven steps that she was exhausted, and that only the fever of fatigue supported her. Her whole body shivered. I took her in my arms, covering her with kisses, and I began to run, to prove to her that my strength could make up for the want of hers ; but, dear as that burden was to me, I could not carry her long.

After running so rapidly, and in order not to let her fall, I was compelled to set her down on the ground, where I stopped, panting, without force, desperate. We were in the midst of an immense plain covered with stones. Scarcely had a few tufts of grass, destined to prove that Nature is everywhere, been able to grow in that arid soil. I cast my eyes around me. The horizon, the same on all sides, enclosed us in an immense circle of solitude and death—a circle which was renewed ever the same at each step which we took. Nevertheless, beyond that line, which our looks sounded in vain, and which our weakness could no longer attain, there were men,—that is to say, perhaps, salvation : those men were savages.

“Thus my last hope was in them. But was it really a hope?—was it not, rather, simply the last effort of vital will, convinced of its impotence even from its first step? Also, on seeing ourselves there—Charlotte and myself—I felt that all was over. I said to myself that we were going to die, and I thanked God for it, who had no longer the right to reproach us with this death, because we had done everything to avoid it. That last happiness, to die with the last breath of Charlotte, was refused to me.

“‘Live!’ said she to me, ‘I command you ; live for your mother, whom you have nothing to reproach with, and whom your death would kill. Live, that there may be at least one on earth who will mourn for me. Live, that people may know how I have died, and perhaps I may then be forgiven.’

“She would have wished to speak to me of her husband and her child. At that supreme hour of death, she had the right to do so ; but she only spoke of ourselves, in

order that the life which she enjoined me to preserve, already sufficiently wretched, should not be made still more so by the remembrance of a word which, uttered in such a moment, in whatever tone it might be, would ever have clung to me as an eternal remorse. Good and sainted Charlotte ! she died smiling on me. I buried her myself in that covetous earth, which will never give her back to me. Do you think that there could be in the world a more terrible punishment, a more inconsolable grief ? I dug a grave as deep as possible—easy to dig in that moving sand,—and there I laid my Charlotte, her two hands crossed upon her bosom in everlasting prayer, and then I cast back sand upon that treasure of my life. I went slowly on. I could have wished eternity itself not to suffice for that last duty, because, once accomplished, I should see her no more. When I arrived at her face, it seemed to me that I never should have the courage to cover it. I would have agreed to pass years, centuries, with physical tortures equal to my moral ones, to have, at least, a wooden coffin wherein to put those beloved remains. Then I should not have seen the cold and hard sand wound those eyes and that mouth ; for I could not believe in the complete insensibility of a body so much beloved. I flung myself down by that beautiful face, which hideous death was going to invade, and I covered it with ardent kisses, as if to make a winding-sheet of love under that one of sand. I continued my painful occupation, with precaution, with despair. There arrived a moment when I saw nothing but the forehead and the hair of Charlotte. Can you understand that, sir ? After having loved a woman to such a degree as to make her

lose honour, family, peace, after having a thousand times with the tenderest kisses brought to her very lips her entire soul, to see this being motionless and cold, to bury her yourself, and throw upon all that happiness the earth which separates you eternally ! not to be able to give her any other proof of love than a grave in the desert, and sand on her face ! It was impossible : that half-closed grave awoke too many remembrances in my heart.

“ I flung off with rage the earth which already covered Charlotte ; and forgetting everything, even my oath to live, I lay down by her side. I took her in my arms for her to share with me her death, since I could not give her my life. When I recovered my senses, I was lying in our cottage. We had been pursued : they had found me senseless upon Charlotte’s grave, and they carried me back to my home. I remembered then the promise respecting my mother ; and here I am, a living evidence that the life of man can resist the greatest wrath of God.”

Mustel had heard the whole of this recital without, as it were, listening to it. That painful history he was acquainted with ; he had it quite alive, throbbing in his memory. It was the same as the ending of Abbé Prevost’s book. The personalities only were changed ; and even then the Professor now and then was compelled to look at Werther, so as to be assured that it was not Desgrieux who spoke. In fact, be it the influence of memory or the unavoidable resemblance of terms in two analogous situations, Mustel had found in that new recital the very expressions, sometimes even entire phrases, of the narration which Abbé Prevost had made Desgrieux utter. Thus the events and realities of life, with their



cold and fatal logic, had given the same end to the guilty love of Charlotte as the philosophical fancy of the poet had to the libertine love of Manon.

Do you see that handsome young man and that beautiful young woman, arm-in-arm, walking radiant, happy, and free on that desert shore, which the immensity of the ocean washes behind them? They have just landed, and are following a road well known to their memory. Their two children look with surprise and admiration at that new and savage Nature of which their minds had never formed an idea.

It is Paul and Virginia returned to the Isle of France. As they breathe that air of their youth, what impressions do they not gather at each step, and how necessary is to them the immensity which surrounds them, in order to give expression to them. From their breasts to the horizon the air scarcely suffices for them. There is the land where they were born, where they had known their parents. There it is! But is it possible to analyze such sensations? No; one imagines them, or one recalls them. It is the work of the heart, not of the mind.

Mary and Dominic had grown very old, but that day must have added twenty years to their future life, if it did not kill them at once. They laughed; they embraced one another; they wept. Now it was, "Do you remember? then . . . Dost thou recollect? . . . Virginia! Paul! Mary! Dominic! Is it possible? How good is God! How beautiful is life!"

Oh, the past!—a dead flower, of which the real perfume begins but with death.

Let us follow our friends.

Dominic and Mary led them on the road to Pamplermousses, and, stopping near the church in the Alley of Bamboos, the old black showed them a grave covered with grass and flowers, and surmounted by a cross, upon which the following words might be read :—

“Tomb of Virginia.”

“What does that mean?” asked Virginia, growing pale, and clinging to Paul, her real life.

“Oh, it is a most extraordinary history,” replied Dominic. Some months ago a vessel was signalized as anchored off the Isle d’Ambre ; but the ship, called the Saint Gérân, was not long before she fired off a cannon to ask for help, for the sea was very rough. I, and every one else, ran to the harbour, I hoping, notwithstanding my age, to be still of some use. The moon had risen : people remarked around it three large circles. The sky was frightfully dark. On our way we thought we heard the sound of thunder ; but, listening more attentively, I recognized it as a discharge of cannon, repeated by echoes. Half an hour later I heard nothing more ; and that silence seemed to me, in such a night, even more frightful than the sad sounds which had preceded it. Inhabitants came from all points ; negroes, in fact, all those who could walk, came running with readiness, as well as myself, to the neighbourhood of the Poudre d’Or. The waves were breaking with dreadful noise ; they covered the rocks and the strand with a dazzling white foam and with glittering sparks.

“We awaited the daylight around a large fire which we had lighted.

“Daylight appeared ; but the sea was so covered with

fog, that we could distinguish nothing. About seven o'clock the governor arrived, with soldiers, whom he placed on the shore, and ordered them to fire off their arms simultaneously. No sooner had they done so, than we perceived a light upon the sea, followed nearly immediately by a cannon shot. We judged that the vessel must be at a short distance from us, and we all ran to that side from whence we had seen its signal. We perceived then, through the fog, the body and the yards of a big ship. We were so near that, notwithstanding the noise of the waves, we could hear the whistle of the master who commanded the manœuvres.

“ Since the moment that the *Saint Gérân* discovered that she was within reach of aid, she did not cease to fire off a cannon every three minutes ; and that sound continued in that terrible silence which here announces a hurricane. The leaves of the trees rustled, without there being the slightest breeze. The sea-birds took refuge on the land. The clouds, which were perceived on the zenith, were in their centre of a fearful blackness, and edged with copper-colour. Towards nine o'clock in the morning we heard from the seaside frightful noises, as if torrents, mingled with thunder, were rolling from the heights of the mountains. The people cried out, ‘ Here is the hurricane ! ’ and in an instant a whirlwind carried away the fog which covered the Island d’Ambre and its canal. The *Saint Gérân* appeared plainly, her deck covered with people, her yards and her topmasts brought to the lower deck, her flag in tatters, four cables at the fore and one at her stern. She presented her head to the waves which flowed in from the open sea, as each sheet of water entered the canal ; the

prow lifted itself entirely out of the water, so that one could see the keel in the air. But in that movement, her stern, beginning to plunge, disappeared as far as the taffrail: thus, as if she was entirely under water, she could neither retreat nor advance.

“It was a terrible though grand spectacle. The sea rose higher and higher. In the rolling of the ship, what was to be feared took place: the cables at her head gave way; and as she was then only attached by one single support, she was thrown on the rocks, half a cable’s length from the shore. But one cry of horror burst from the whole group. The entire crew, despairing of aid, precipitated themselves into the sea, upon yards, upon planks, hencoops, barrels, and tables. We then saw an object worthy of our deepest pity. A young woman, dressed in white, like an angel alighting from heaven, or like one dead, ready for the tomb, appeared in the gallery of the St. Gérân’s stern. The sight of this woman, the prey of such terrible danger, filled us with horror and despair.

“A young man who was there threw himself into the sea to try to save her, but was flung back on the shore, with hands, face, and body lacerated. He wanted to try again: we had great difficulty to restrain him. As for the young woman, she smiled, and made us with her hands a sign of eternal adieu. All the sailors had thrown themselves into the sea; one only remained, naked and vigorous as a Hercules. He approached the beautiful girl with the greatest respect: we saw him throw himself at her knees, and attempt even by force to remove her dress, but she repelled him with dignity.

“‘Save her ! save her !’ people cried out, with excitement ; but at that moment a mountain of water rushed between the Isle d’Ambre and the coast, rolling as with wrath towards the ship, which still resisted. All disappeared ; and when the surf had dispersed, we saw nothing more, but the sailor, a bold swimmer, who had desired to save this unknown one, and who arrived safe and sound on shore.

“‘Oh ! my God,’ cried he, throwing himself on his knees on the sand, ‘Thou hast saved my life ; but I would have given it, with all my heart, for that saint whom nothing could persuade to undress herself as I had done.’

“ We ran along the beach, where we hoped the sea would throw the poor girl’s corpse, so that we might pay to her the last duties due to so much courage and virtue. We found her, in fact, half covered with sand. Her features were in no way altered ; one would have said that she slept. She was beautiful, very beautiful, like you, Virginia, and she might have been of the same age as you ; but death had given her a still more youthful appearance, and her face bore the immutable age of the angels of our Lord. We carried the body into a fisherman’s hut, where we gave it into the charge of some poor Malay woman, who undertook to wash her. None knew who this woman was.

“ When the young girls of the island saw her so beautiful, so young, so chaste, they said there could be in this world but one woman capable of dying through modesty, and that this woman was Virginia ; and they could never be persuaded to the contrary. They said that you had desired to see your native land again ;

that perhaps Paul had died over there ; that it could only be you ; and if they were mistaken, at all events, that unknown woman was your sister in purity, and deserved well to sleep under the invocation of your name. The funeral was performed in a most touching manner. Eight young girls, of the highest position in the island, dressed in white, holding palms in their hands, bore the corpse, covered with flowers ; a chorus of little children followed, singing hymns ; behind them came the most distinguished inhabitants of the island ; then the governor, followed by the whole population. In fact, there is the grave, always supplied with new flowers ; and that is the cause, whilst still alive, thanks be God's, your name, Virginia, is already upon the cross of a tomb."

"And did you not know later," asked Virginia, "the name of this poor woman?"

"Yes; she came from France, and her name is Manon."

"Manon!" exclaimed Virginia, bursting into tears. "Oh, yes, they were right to give her my name, for she is, indeed, my sister."

And Virginia fell on her knees, and wept long over the grave, deploring that terrible death, without suspecting the cause.

Paul was very pale ; he kneeled down, and prayed silently. On rising, he exchanged a glance with Mustel, and pressed his hand. He had understood it all.

Thus Manon had kept her word. The hand of man had never more touched her. Thus the modesty which love caused her to lose, love had returned to her ; and Manon has now the right to repose in eternity under the name of the most chaste and the most pure of women.

“ Dear children, united hearts, Christian souls,” murmured Mustel, contemplating Paul and Virginia, “ be happy and blessed,—you who have nothing to reproach yourselves with. You have at last returned to that Nature which was your cradle; you, who could only suffer by the sufferings of others.”

And Mustel stretched out his hands towards Paul and Virginia; but it seemed to him that they drew back, light and floating as shadows. He called to them; they smiled on him without answering, and, continuing to retreat, they melted by degrees into the vague tints which limit the sight of the soul. Under the empire of that hallucination, the Professor sprang towards them; but he struck against his table, and found nothing more beneath his hand than the three books which composed his favourite lecture, and which are ‘ Werther,’ ‘ Manon,’ and ‘ Paul and Virginia.’

“ Well,” said he, understanding his mistake; “ I have been talking with spirits.”

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